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Literary Supplement

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THE Prime Minister's eye trouble has necessitated another operation, which by the time these lines are in print will, we hope, have been successfully carried out. The air has been thick with rumours of his impending retirement, and Mr. Runciman has even been named as the Elisha on whom Elijah's mantle is to fall. But we are glad to be assured there is no foundation for all this; Mr. MacDonald expects to be in harness again in six weeks' time. There is much on which we are not in agreement with him; but in the realm of international affairs we should be sorry to see this National Government without him. The Lausanne Conference, which is due to begin on June 16th, will be a critical event, and, whatever the chances may be of its remedying the present discontents, it is important that Mr. MacDonald should be there at the head of the British delegation.

* * *

Last Sunday brought the expected swing to the Left in France. But it did not go to the extreme Left. On the first ballots the Radicals have gained seven seats, the Socialists have gained three and lost one. Both are sure to win many more on May 8th, when the second ballots will take place in 359 constituencies; with supreme luck they might between them have a majority of fifty or more. It is pretty certain anyhow that M. Tardieu will not be the next Prime Minister, and highly probable that M. Herriot will. But, though the Radicals are likely to be the largest party in the Chamber, they will have nothing approaching a clear majority of their own. Coalition with the Socialists is possible, but may be difficult, for M. Léon Blum has laid down hard terms for his support. If he is unwilling to modify them, M. Herriot may decide to look for allies in the Centre in order to form a Government. A Herriot administration on that basis may not be quite a case of "Amurath to Amurath succeeds." But from the international point of view the prospect is not too encouraging. M. Herriot does not stand, as M. Blum does, for a whole-hearted policy of appeasement and generosity towards Germany. And the chances are that the new French Government will show a change of men rather than of programme.

* * *

A preliminary report issued by the Lytton Commission throws some interesting light—the light of a Japanese lantern—on the present state of Manchuria. The Japanese army of occupation to-day numbers 22,400 as against 10,590 last September. These troops, we are informed for the hundredth time, cannot be withdrawn till order and security are established. That, apparently, will depend on the progress of the Manchukuo Government army, the force which has been created, instructed and largely officered by the Japanese,

and has a total strength of 85,000. Besides this, the "independent" State of Manchukuo has a police force of about 119,000, which also the Japanese are very kindly helping to organise. The enemy forces include 43,000 former troops of the Chinese army, 40,000 franc-tireurs, and 52,000 of our old friends the bandits. The Chinese Government, we are solemnly assured, does not now exercise authority in any part of Manchuria. The Lytton Report does not deal with other complicating factors—the Red Russians outside and the White Russians inside. Anxiety still prevails in Moscow about provocative action against the Soviet by Japan; and, in particular, there is fear of the seizure of the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway. We hope that the Japanese are not going to add another crime to their already long list; but the Soviet Government certainly cannot be blamed either for their fears or for their precautions.

* * *

Reports of the economic and social conditions in the United States grow steadily worse. A few days ago the New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* sent an appalling account of the distress in the city. No fewer than 1,200,000 men, women and children, he says, are the victims of unemployment. Many are literally starving; many have taken to beggary in an aggressive form or to regular thieving. And all this, unhappily, is only the story of many other cities writ large. State funds have been heavily drawn on; the resources of charitable organisations are exhausted, and, unless some new and big measures of relief are carried out, a catastrophe must be expected before many months are past. The most obvious measures (apart from schemes for "restoring prosperity" by inflation) are public works and unemployment insurance. Both these are, in fact, being pressed for strongly. There are rumours of a plan for a Federal loan on a vast scale for the former purpose. And the special Committee appointed by the Senate is definitely recommending a compulsory insurance scheme throughout the country, but without Federal or State contributions. That seems to us a counsel of perfection. However frightened Americans — or some Americans—may be of the British "dole," we do not believe they will escape the necessity of supporting the fund with public moneys.

* * *

With a month of the financial year still to go, Germany's estimated revenue for the year is already below the actual expenditure to date. This is in spite of the drastic curtailment of expenditure, and of Germany's unenviable position as the country with the most burdensome taxation in the world. Germany has, indeed, thanks to the wiping out of her old currency, a very small burden of debt, apart from reparations; and a larger part of her total revenue is spent on social services than any other country is able so to apply. But unemployment eats up the available revenue at a prodigious rate; and the Germans have also spent a good deal in subsidising their export trades in one way or another in order to keep their balance of payments straight in spite of the world slump. They cannot, however, both subsidise exports and balance their budget; for in Germany, if anywhere, the limits of taxable capacity have been reached. Moreover, the artificial restrictions on imports and the subsidies on exports have both lowered the standard of life in Germany and reacted unfavourably on the trade of other countries. Germany is somehow managing to "hang on" under Dr. Brüning's drastic treatment. But she can do no more than that.

* * *

The resolution in the House of Commons confirming the provisional Tariffs Order was important. The Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to have made up his mind on two points—one, that tariff-making as a function of Government is one over which Parliament has practically relinquished control; the other, that we have now definitely advanced from a 10 per cent. tariff-level to a level somewhere around 20 per cent. Mr. Chamberlain does not wish to dictate to his Committee, but he believes this latter figure about represents their intentions. This means that Britain must very soon take rank as a high-protection country. The debate produced nothing new in the way of argument, but served to underline, once again, the farcical position of Sir Herbert Samuel and his colleagues. This time, in fact, Sir Herbert, in addition to firing his full allowance of blank, positively invited a counter-demonstration by Mr. Churchill, whose carefully prepared impromptus went down equally well with the gallery. Sir Herbert's position is rendered all the stranger by the very strong hints conveyed to him at Clacton; unless he breaks with the Government within a very few months' time his long-suffering followers, it now seems certain, will be looking for another leader.

* * *

The Labour Party has been taken to task for commenting adversely on the recommendations of the Import Duties Advisory Committee, on the ground that this body is non-political and should not be made a subject of political controversy. It appears, then, that we must accept without complaint whatever impositions the Government, on the Committee's advice, decides to lay upon us. We may protest to the Committee, and to no one else; but the protests must be made in a strictly non-political form. If it were as easy as all this to take matters out of the scope of political controversy, how much happier the task of Government would be! For a Government would only need to refer a problem to a committee of its own friends in order to escape all criticism about it from that moment. Assuredly it is the Labour Party's business, and the business of everyone who has kept his head in this bewildered world, to draw attention to the fact that the proposals of the Import Duties Advisory Committee are in many cases ill-considered, and in all cases wholly unaccompanied by safeguards for the consumer, or assurances that steps will be taken to improve efficiency in the protected trades. And, in our view, the Labour Party was wise in moving a reasoned amendment in preference to merely voting against the Order confirming the new duties.

* * *

This week's conference of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, which represents all the leading Trade Unions in the cotton trade, has not thrown any new light on the relations between the textile

workers and their employers. But it has served further to emphasise the intense hostility which the working of the Means Test has aroused in Lancashire. The main incidence of the Anomalies Act was upon the textile operatives; and since the Means Test came into operation it seems to have been administered more severely in Lancashire than in most other areas. It was declared at the Conference that in Lancashire forty per cent. of all applications for transitional payment had been disallowed, as against only three per cent in Glamorgan; and there are also great discrepancies between one Lancashire town and another. The Conference rejected a resolution calling for better administration in favour of an amendment demanding complete abolition of the Means Test, and urged that the provision for all classes of the unemployed ought to be made under a uniform national scheme, and not capriciously by a host of separate local authorities. There was no doubt about the strength of feeling among the delegates: nor is there any of its intensity throughout the industrial North.

* * *

There have been various rumours this week about the course of the negotiations between the miners and the mine-owners. It seems clear that the Government has decided to extend the life of Part I of the Coal Mines Act, which gives legal sanction to the existing regulation of output and prices. This will probably be amended in order to meet the objections of a section of the owners; but there is no likelihood that regulation will be discontinued. The disputed questions are hours and wages. The owners are said to have been promised by the Government an extension of the period for which the working day is to remain at 7½ hours; and the miners complain that this has been promised without any satisfactory conditions about wages. The owners, it seems, want to get the present hours continued indefinitely, but are only prepared to guarantee the maintenance of the present wages for one year. The miners hold that wages and hours should be fixed together for the same period. This seems a reasonable view; and it is difficult to believe that the Government can mean, despite the Geneva Convention, to extend the 7½-hour day indefinitely. A year's agreement to maintain both wages and hours at the present levels seems the most likely solution.

* * *

The story that the police are hampered in their work by regulations concerning the taking of statements from witnesses was, one hopes, finally disposed of by Sir Herbert Samuel during the debate on the Police Estimates. The Royal Commission of 1924 on police procedure, which reported in the excitement occasioned by the Savidge case, made no new rules. It merely made clear the existing Judge's Rules: that is, it restated the conditions which must be observed in the taking of statements if these statements were to be accepted as evidence. These Rules, as Sir Herbert said, are required by the most elementary considerations of justice. The alleged instructions to the police never existed. The attack is a pure newspaper canard—one that becomes all the more obvious when it is realised that there were actually more "unsolved murder mysteries" in 1924 than there have been in any subsequent year.

An Irish correspondent writes: After three days debate Mr. De Valera's Bill to remove the Oath from the Constitution finally received its second reading at midnight. It is significant that all the Independent members, including those who had voted for Mr. De Valera as President, went into the lobby against the Bill. The majority consisted of Fianna Fail and seven official Labourites. As Mr. Cosgrave's party has already lost two members by death, the policy of removal of the Oath by unilateral legislation can claim a majority of only four votes in the Dail as constituted after the General Election. But the debates were not entirely devoted to the Oath. Unemployment came in for some hours' talk and Mr. De Valera explicitly accepted the principle of work or maintenance. He developed his old idea of economic self-sufficiency—Sinn Fein—an expansion of the home market by a revival of industrial activity spread over the country rather than concentrated in a few cities as at present. One minister, discussing a proposal for a bounty on exported butter and replying to a suggestion that the Fianna Fail political policy might make it difficult to export any butter at all to England, said "If we cannot export we can eat." The phrase is neater than the prospect of consuming at home some extra thousands of tons of dairy produce. The most remarkable revelation of economic policy came from the President. "We will work within the present system. If the present system fails then I say we shall go out of the system and ask the House to support us." Go out—Yes, but whither?

The refusal of negotiations with the British makes the future uncertain. The new Government goes on imposing tariffs—it has added thirteen so far—by order subject to subsequent ratification by the Dail. In each case Imperial Preference is recognised and in each case, too, increases in the cost of living, for the moment at least, appear inevitable. The Budget is to be introduced on May 11th, and according to a declaration in the Dail a big deficit is expected, and a rise in income tax with lower levels of income subject to super-tax is generally thought certain. Trouble may be brewing, but people go on talking and working and dancing—even the new Ministers dance in full evening dress; but they depart, leaving their ladies behind, when the King's representative arrives. Optimists here of varying political views hope that everything will be all right with not too much damage done. Pessimists predict that whatever the British do, or if they do nothing at all, we are in for a bad time because we are losing good will in our best market. Nobody admires Mr. Thomas for his breathless crisis-indicating pronouncements in the House of Commons.

A RUSSIAN SUPPLEMENT

Next Week's NEW STATESMAN AND NATION *will include a* RUSSIAN SUPPLEMENT. *It will contain a survey of the Soviet State at the beginning of its second Five Year Plan. The British contributors include Sir George Paish, and the Russian, Maxim Gorky.*

THE INDIAN IMPASSE

IF the speech of the Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons represents the common will of the present Government, we have nothing to look forward to in India except years of bloodshed and chaos and ultimately the forcible disruption of the British Commonwealth of Nations. There was not in Sir Samuel's statement one word which suggested any understanding of the Indian people or sympathy with Indian aspirations or appreciation of the deplorable position now reached in India. In order to underline the significance of his speech, Mr. Winston Churchill rose to express his complete agreement with Sir Samuel's present attitude and to congratulate him on his conversion to his own policy of the firm hand. It is difficult to believe that Sir Samuel Hoare represents the whole Cabinet in this matter. Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin and Lord Sankey all have records which do not square with a reliance on lathi charges as a basis of government. It is impossible that they can share Sir Samuel Hoare's fatuous optimism.

The keynote of Sir Samuel's speech was the remark that "the only war between England and India that is in progress is the cricket match" between an All-India and an All-England eleven. He gave a glowing account of the excellent administration of the country and said that he was satisfied that the Ordinances were being "sensibly administered." He admitted that there were still 26,600 men and women in prison, but dismissed all the accounts of the abuses now occurring under the rule of the Ordinances as "unscrupulous propaganda."

Now we are very far from believing all the stories that we hear from India. There is a rigorous censorship of telegrams from India to England to-day and letters are not immune from interference. In these circumstances much reliable news is necessarily suppressed and much that is less reliable finds its way through roundabout channels. It is difficult to be sure what is true and what is not true. For our part we accept nothing unless we have first-hand information of its truth. We might take the evidence of Dr. Privat, whom Sir Samuel Hoare dismissed as a "Swiss gentleman" to whom "no one pays much attention in his own country." Dr. Privat is a Professor at the University of Geneva and has been Swiss representative to the Assembly of the League of Nations. On his return from a visit to India, where he had an audience with the Viceroy, he spoke, on request, to a meeting of Members of Parliament. He simply gave evidence of the abuses of the Ordinances which he had personally witnessed and reported that these methods were, on the evidence of Indians with whom he had talked, rapidly alienating the most moderate from all confidence in British rule. Why should such evidence be dismissed with contempt?

If, however, we are only to accept the evidence of English people, we need go no farther than the speech of Miss Eleanor Rathbone in the House of Commons. Miss Rathbone is an independent in politics; she has no axe to grind: she has just returned from India and spoke with studious moderation. She pointed out that under the Ordinances anyone, however moderate his views or peaceable his behaviour, may be arrested as a suspect and imprisoned; that the custom now is to imprison a man and then release him on condition that he reports daily. Any failure to report—and the conditions demanded are sometimes such as to make it impossible for him to comply—he is "sentenced to six months or two years, but generally one year's rigorous imprisonment, supplemented by a fine." Another practice is to order a man, charged with no crime, "to leave his place of business and go to some town where he may have neither house nor office and to continue to reside there till further notice." These Ordinances seemed to Miss Rathbone not unnaturally to have produced an atmosphere of "sizzling discontent." In particular, she was impressed with the effect on college students who are deprived of all legal ways of expressing their nationalist sympathies.

It seems clear that if the Government is genuinely anxious to carry out the policy of giving India a constitutional settlement, then it has made mistakes so gross that it has stultified itself. If that is indeed its policy why was Gandhi imprisoned before he was even permitted to see the Viceroy on his arrival in India? That action alone has been generally interpreted in India as an abandonment of the will to peace by the Government. If the policy of agreement was intended why were the Ordinances, admittedly justified as a remedy against terrorism in Bengal, applied all over the country in districts where they could only have the result of rousing the political consciousness of thousands of unpolitical persons whose peaceful relatives and neighbours have been beaten with lathis or imprisoned without warrant or explanation? The fact is that these two policies of repression and conciliation do not mix.

Is there nothing in all this to make Sir Samuel Hoare think? He boasts that there is comparative order in India to-day and that the Federal Constitution has been accepted by the Princes and that everything is going well. But to whom is the Constitution to be offered when it is ready? Mr. Gandhi is in gaol and Mr. Gandhi is the one leader whose authority is recognised among the vast number of Congress sympathisers. Now that Mrs. Naidu and the Pandit Malaviya are also imprisoned, what leader of Indian opinion is not in gaol? Can Sir Samuel Hoare suggest any single group of Hindu opinion which, if he offers a Constitution, will be in a position to discuss it, or willing, if they are permitted, to accept it?

The Government has reached an impasse and calls it a victory. Just as in Ireland Mr. Lloyd George boasted that he "had murder on the run," and then a few months later treated on equal terms with the "murderers," who became very efficient and respectable members of the Cosgrave Government, so sooner or later the British Government must treat with Gandhi and recognise Congress. For Congress, as Lord Irwin repeated in his lecture in Canada last week, is more and more the mouthpiece of the mass of Hindus. Increasingly, like the proscribed Dail in Ireland during the period of the Black and Tans, Congress gathers authority from its proscription. Just as the Dail met secretly and in cellars, so delegates from all parts of India came to Delhi for the banned session of Congress. They met in spite of the police. It was a ten minutes'

session in one of the main streets of Delhi. They had time to reaffirm their policy and their confidence in Mr. Gandhi. So far violence is not very much in their thoughts and murders are still isolated acts confined to a few districts. There is still a mass of good will towards England in India. Under the rule of the Ordinances it is dwindling every day. The burning question in India now is whether they are to be renewed. If Gandhi remains in prison, if the Government continues to apply generally Ordinances that are only justified in a few districts, if it regards recognition of the real leaders of Indian opinion as beneath its pride, then the Constitution, now nearly ready for acceptance, will be so much waste-paper. "Self-government" means government by the people whom the Indians themselves desire to govern them: if the Government cannot realise that and pocket its pride, all hope of peace in India is over.

CO-OPERATORS AND INCOME TAX

WHENEVER the Conservatives get into power—and they can fairly be regarded as in power to-day—the question of taxing the Co-operative Movement turns up like a bad penny. It is a troublesome question for the Tories, since, on the one hand, the demand that the "Co-ops" shall be taxed is pressed strongly by a large body of private traders, and, on the other, the Tories are naturally unwilling to run the risk of ranging the millions of Co-operators solidly on the Labour side. It is not forgotten that the Co-operative Party, as an ally of Labour, was called into being by the threat of taxation during the war, or that, if the general mass of Co-operators really took to politics as an organised force, they would be numerous enough to turn the scale in almost any industrial constituency. At present, though there is a Co-operative Party allied with Labour, Co-operators do not give these allies anything like their united support. There are plenty of Liberals, and even Tories, still on the Management Committee of the Co-operative Societies; and there are plenty of issues, of which much can be made, to hold back the creation of a solid Labour and Co-operative alliance. Co-operators do not want to see the municipalities or the State running services which they think could be better run by the Co-operative Movement. And Co-operation, as a trading venture, is apt to look at a good many economic problems with a somewhat different eye from that of the Labour Party.

The Tories accordingly hesitate to give way to the demand of the private traders that Co-operators shall be taxed. They would like to agree; but dare they? They are not at all sure; and so the question, studied a hundred times already, is to go before another tribunal for investigation. The Government can then wait and see what this tribunal recommends, and how its report is received. If its proposals seem likely to arouse too much opposition, there will, after all, be no need to act upon them. The matter is not shelved. There is to be what is called a "try-on."

What, then, is the real cause for and against taxing the Co-operative Movement? The individual Co-operator at present draws an income from his Society in two forms—as interest on his share or loan capital invested in the movement, and as dividend on purchases which he makes at the Co-operative store. And the Co-operative Society, for its part, draws the revenues out of which it pays interest and dividends from two sources—from the surplus realised on its sales and from its own income from investments in Co-operative or other undertakings. Moreover, some part of its sales—usually a small part—is made to non-members, and on these sales full dividend, or half dividend, or no dividend at all may be paid. The problem of taxing the movement is therefore not so simple as it sounds, since it is first necessary to ascertain what revenues it is, and what it is not, proposed to tax.

Take first the question of taxing Co-operative interest on share and loan capital. There is obviously no final reason why the recipients of such interest should not pay income tax, if their total incomes are large enough to make them subject to tax, and unless it is thought desirable to exempt such investments from taxation, as certain other types of small savings, such as life insurances, are exempted, in order to encourage thrift. But it is also clear that, as a very large proportion of Co-operators have incomes too small to make them subject to income tax at all, or at any rate to taxation at the full rate, the deduction of the tax at source would be likely to prove both uneconomic and unjust. Most of the money so deducted would probably have to be returned to the payers; or, if it were not, this would be because of their failure to present their case for repayment aright. There may be a case for taxing Co-operative interest, but there is assuredly none for deducting the taxation at source.

But an even more important matter than this is the question of taxing Co-operative "dividends." For the "divi" is not, like the dividend of the business shareholder, a payment made as a return on invested capital. It is a "dividend" not on capital but on purchases made at the Co-operative stores. Private traders persist in regarding it as a form of profit. But it is not really a profit at all. It is a rebate of part of the purchase price. There are some Societies—one in Glasgow, for example—which pay no "dividend on purchases." They are able, because of this, to charge their members lower prices, but none will claim that the members ought to be subject to tax for buying their goods cheap. Co-operative Societies which do pay "divi" could abolish it, and reduce their prices; but the members prefer to pay more for their goods and get part of the purchase price returned later on. This is for the working classes a useful form of saving, and the "divi" often comes in very handy for buying things which are not needed every week and can be ill afforded out of the weekly wage. The "divi" is, in effect, a form of working-class saving; and in some cases Co-operative Societies have been known to charge more than market prices, with the full acquiescence of their members, in order to keep dividends high. This may be a bad practice; but it is no one's concern but the Co-operators' if they choose to save in this way. Assuredly, it constitutes no case for taxing Co-operative dividends as income, for that would in effect involve double taxation. The object of Consumers' Co-operation is to eliminate profits, and not to make them, and the real price of Co-operators' goods is the price at the store less the amount of dividend subsequently paid. No case for taxing the "divi" as a profit can be made out; it is not a profit, but a rebate upon the purchase price.

Co-operative dividends ought, thus, clearly to be exempt from taxation, so far as they arise out of trade with members. But if a Co-operative Society trades with non-members, to whom it pays no dividend or only dividend at a reduced rate, the effect is to swell the "divi" payable to its members on their purchases by something that is really a profit. On sums made in this way income tax ought theoretically to be paid, as far as the ultimate recipients of the money have large enough incomes to make them subject to tax. But the total sum made in this way is very small; and it is questionable if it is worth the trouble of collecting.

A more difficult problem arises where Co-operative Societies derive a revenue from investments, either in other Co-operative bodies or in ordinary stocks and shares. For the sums received from this source go into the pool out of which "dividends" to members are paid and collective

services maintained. Traders argue that sums accruing in this way ought to be taxed at the standard rate. But clearly to do this would involve a much higher rate of tax than is appropriate to the size of the total incomes of most of the ultimate recipients. There is no case for taxing the "incomes" of the Co-operative Societies as such, but only those of their individual members. A logical case can be made out for making members whose incomes are large enough to render them subject to income tax pay on that part of their "divi" which arises out of the receipts of their Societies from capital investments. But is the potential yield of such taxation likely to be large enough to make it worth while to enter into this very intricate and expensive type of assessment?

To sum up, as far as there is a case at all for taxing the sums distributed through the Co-operative Movement by way of dividend, it applies to so small a part of the total sum distributed, and involves so many abstruse calculations, as to be of highly doubtful value from the standpoint of the Exchequer. If it is now done, it will be done not for the sake of the yield but as a mere piece of competitive vindictiveness inspired by the private trading interests. From the public standpoint there is nothing in it.

Nevertheless, it may be done; and, especially at present, Co-operators are wise to be upon their guard. For many of the supporters of the present Government in the House of Commons are chunkheaded enough for anything, and disposed to regard themselves as the servants of private business interests. The private traders are making a great clamour, and their noise may well catch the ears of the back-benchers. But it will be both foolish and unjust, and calamitous politically for a Government to tax the Co-operative Movement. It would mean the subjection to income tax of millions of persons whose incomes are below the exemption limit. It would probably serve, as nothing else would serve, to bring the Co-operative Movement into politics as an effective fighting force on the Labour side.

A LONDON DIARY

I HAVE heard a good deal of criticism, both at home and from Geneva, of the irruption of the bigwigs into the Disarmament Conference. Their comings and goings and their talks behind closed doors have not cleared the air; indeed they seem to have thickened it. Private conversations between leading statesmen do not, of course, in themselves betoken a return to the bad days of the "old diplomacy." They may be a useful and essential part of a newer and better diplomacy. But if they are badly staged and badly handled in the press they may easily unsettle, instead of establishing, confidence. And this is what has happened in the last week or two. Great hopes were attached to Mr. MacDonald's visit—all the greater because nobody questions his sincere desire for disarmament. But his efforts appear so far to have had little success; and we are left to draw what encouragement we may from his threat that unless France and Italy agree to sign the London Naval Treaty, Great Britain will build more warships. Mr. MacDonald on his return declared that the failure of the Conference was unthinkable. Yet the unthinkable is being thought by millions all over the world. And there are delegates at Geneva doing their best to justify pessimism. A few days ago one was glad to find Sir John Simon aligning himself with Signor Grandi and pressing for qualitative disarmament—the banning or internationalising of a number of weapons which are "most offensive and most efficacious against national defence." And now the technical experts in the Commissions are making a farce of all this. Admiral Pound, the representative of the British Government, maintains that there are no naval weapons which can be prohibited as aggressive—not even the submarine. His general thesis is supported by the American and Japanese experts, and his testimonial to the innocent little submarine is, of course, welcomed by the French. And then, to make confusion worse confounded, the First Lord of the Admiralty opposes his admirals, and argues for the abolition of submarines. It seems that the doctrine of "agreement to differ" is to be extended to the servants as well as the members of the National Government.

* * *

I suppose people still remember the Post Office Savings scare which Mr. Runciman used with such effect at the General Election. The gist of it was that the Labour Government were jeopardising the savings of the poor by allowing them to be used for the temporary requirements of the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Post Office depositors will now be interested to learn that their money can be used to enable the Treasury to gamble on the exchange market, to fill up an awkward gap in the national finances and incidentally to compensate the Bank of England for the losses it sustained last year. Such is the purpose and effect of the present Government's Exchange Equalisation account proposals. I shall look forward to hearing Mr. Runciman explain that Post Office deposits are not kept under the counter in a box and that this new arrangement is just as legitimate as that practised by the Labour and previous Governments. If the Opposition were as unscrupulous as Mr. Runciman they would now stump the country declaring that the Government is taking risks with the poor man's money. The time has surely come for Mr. Runciman to make a public apology in this matter. We expect partisan statements at elections, but this particular stunt seems to me one that should be put on permanent record as an example of the extremity of meanness and dishonesty to which an ambitious politician may resort. With regard to the Bank of England, which has now covered its losses by this device, I notice that at a time when cuts have been generally imposed and dividends are being passed on all sides, the Bank has declared its usual dividend of 16 per cent., and states that it expects better results next year. That this should occur without public protest is a justification for the modest secrecy which is so characteristic of all the Bank's activities.

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The splitting of the atom in the Cavendish Laboratory has not so far had any of the violent physical or political results anticipated in *Wings over Europe*. There have been a few reverberations in the daily papers and a modest letter from the successful scientists in *Nature*, and that is all. It was, I think, twelve years ago that Lord Rutherford succeeded in disintegrating nitrogen: now, after several years of preliminary work and only ten days occupied by the actual experiment, an atom of hydrogen has been split. The actual power needed was 120,000 volts, terrific enough, but not nearly so great as Lord Rutherford had expected. For the first time new energy has been deliberately created; the old law of "conservation of energy" passes into the limbo assigned to exploded certainties. Even when I was at Cambridge the scientists in the Cavendish seemed to me the most blessed of mortals. They are a team working to a plan under an inspired leader. That is why they achieve results—this success follows only a few weeks after the discovery of the neutron—which far more expensively equipped laboratories quite fail to achieve. Another reason why they outstrip other experimenters and why they seem to me so happy is that they refuse to consider the philosophic or social repercussions of what they do. It may be that this splitting of the atom will some day seem the most important event of our generation. But Rutherford and his colleagues do not discuss whether it will lead to men killing each other more efficiently: nor do they bother about the philosophic implications. As experimental scientists they do not discuss the Universe. They leave that to Sir James Jeans, who will no doubt have to write another popular book before long.

Mr. Stanley Morison's *The English Newspaper* (beautifully produced by the Cambridge Press for 45s.), is one of the most interesting books I have come across for some time. It deals with the *physical* development of newspapers over a period of three hundred years. Comparatively few people, I suppose, consciously choose their paper because they like its type and lay-out. And yet every editor knows that any change in the traditional appearance of his paper will provoke a storm of protest. This conservatism among readers is the main reason why our newspapers remain so severely traditional in their make-up. And yet there have been great changes in the appearance of newspapers, and when the changes are made the bold paper reaps the benefit. The protesting public soon settles down with the new format and forgets that it has not been eternal. Mr. Morison's book raises a host of exciting questions, artistic, historical, psychological, and practical. The whole physical side of presenting ideas is a neglected subject. Has anyone ever discussed the influence of headlines on language, or asked whether the thought of this generation has not been greatly affected by the fact that "dole" and "war" are short words which go into a headline, while "unemployment insurance," "international co-operation," or "arbitration," and the rest of them, are hopeless from the point of view of a sub-editor? All sorts of incidental questions of that kind arise out of Mr. Morison's book, which is the first expert examination of the mechanical basis of one of the great forces changing our civilisation.

* * *

Cynicism is, I suppose, the natural result of the failure of American government to do anything about the crime situation. I quote two news items from a New York theatrical paper:

> Pat Crowe, the old time kidnapper, wants to play some vaudeville. He was submitted last week to RKO by Billy Diamond. In a wire to the agent, Crowe stated he figured the current prominence of kidnap stuff is sufficient to make him eligible for the stage. Among his qualifications, Crowe mentions his work in the Rockefeller case and the notorious Cudahy kidnapping of 30 years ago.

"Work" is, without doubt, the perfect word. The second item concerns the Lindbergh case; which I should not have expected anyone to find in the least amusing:

> First Broadway attempt at commercializing the Lindbergh kidnapping is the peddling by pitchmen of what they call the "Lindbergh Ladder." Along with it, the pitchmen offer a toy baby effigy. To make it inviting it's a trick doll that somersaults down the rungs of the ladder. Asking price is 25 cents.

CRITIC.

THE RIDDLE OF THE AIR

BY VISCOUNT CECIL.

THERE will be no disarmament until the problem of the air is settled. There are many different factors in the Geneva discussions, all of which lead one to that conclusion. There is, in the first place, the strong argument for the abolition of military aircraft altogether, based upon the fact that Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria are forbidden by the Treaties to keep any. There is the definite proposal of the Italian Government that all military aeroplanes should be abolished, except a limited number of single-seater fighting machines and some training machines. There is the conviction, strongly expressed by the French Government, that even were military air forces disbanded, civilian aircraft would be adapted for bombing purposes, and the sweeping plan which they have in consequence put forward for the internationalisation of civil aviation—the control of civil aircraft by the organised international community—and the monopoly by that community of the most formidable bombing aircraft. And behind all these schemes and several others are the terrible memories of aerial bombardment, the knowledge that the power of aircraft to destroy dense centres of population has immensely increased and that, as the British, Italian and American air manœuvres of last summer abundantly proved, there can be no adequate protection of a great city against aerial attack. The preoccupation of a nation with its "security" varies from a phlegmatic acceptance in one country of the fact that some kind of defence forces have to be paid for, to a state of acute paranoia in another. But it is a universal and a very natural phenomenon; and if the Conference of Geneva were to eliminate certain weapons of land and sea warfare and even reduce the armies and navies considerably, and yet leave untouched the national air forces, "security" would not be adequately provided for. On the contrary, air armaments would acquire proportionately an even greater and more sinister importance, and the peoples would continue to be obsessed with the nightmare of destruction from the air, to the detriment of international sanity.

What then is the solution of this riddle of the air? There is probably no perfect solution; but I believe it to be possible already to see lines upon which a satisfactory advance towards air security and air disarmament could be made.

Military aircraft fall into two main classes—fighting machines and bombers. True, there are intermediate classes, but different purposes have more and more produced differentiations of type. A light, swift machine, able to rise quickly to great heights, is the most useful to engage and harass an invading force or to reconnoitre. These requirements militate against the weight, the size, the longer wing-span and the greater petrol-carrying capacity which are needed to enable bombers to keep the air long enough and go far enough for their terrible mission. It is the bombing aeroplane which is the great menace to civil populations. That is what we want first and foremost to banish from the skies.

Can that best be done by the complete suppression of national military air forces? That would be the ideal; and who can say that it is impossible, since it was imposed upon the powers defeated in the Great War? If no military air estimates at all might be voted in a Government's budget, it would be exceedingly difficult to make use of public funds for the building of bombs or bombers. The complete disappearance of military aircraft would certainly diminish international misunderstanding.

But it is one thing to impose so sweeping a reform on a beaten enemy; it is another to bring it about voluntarily, especially when a large and respected body of men compose these national air forces, and manufacturers look to them as a regular source of profit. The air force is popular too; for it preserves an element of chivalry only too hard to discover in modern warfare. There would certainly be an outcry against the proposal of wholesale abolition. It must be admitted also that a considerable school of thought believes fighting aeroplanes to furnish a certain protection against air attack—at any rate, in day time. So long as heavy aeroplanes of any kind exist, the bogy of the bomb will remain; and against all evidence the public clings to the belief that they will be protected by fighters. Hence if, for psychological reasons, the suppression both of fighting machines and bombers cannot be brought about by this Conference, the next best thing would be to adopt Signor Grandi's proposal and to limit national air forces to single-seater fighting machines with their weight, power, wing-span and wing-area fixed by international agreement, and subjected to international supervision. All military planes exceeding the agreed limits, including all bombers and "big gun fighters," would be scrapped. If this plan be adopted by the erstwhile Allied and Associated Powers, they must be prepared to face the logical claim by Germany and the other countries who at present are allowed no

military air forces, that they should be permitted to provide themselves with the same light single-seater machines for use on land and, in the case of Germany, with a navy.

What then would be the position? All nations would be on the same footing, they might have a limited number of planes serviceable for reconnaissance and possibly defensive purposes, but practically valueless for aggression. They would also be on the same footing as regards civil aircraft. But as to the numbers of civil aeroplanes, there are great inequalities as between neighbouring countries—both Germany and France, for instance, possess many more than Great Britain. All the larger types of machines used for the transport of passengers and goods could, with slight alteration, be used for night bombing. This well-known fact provides the stock argument of the enemies of disarmament. Why it should serve as an adequate reason for piling up rival military air forces and so multiplying the dangers of reprisal, I could never see. From the unhappy civilian's point of view, one would have thought that the possibility of being bombed by a few converted air liners was appreciably better than the certainty of being bombed by hundreds of military squadrons as well. But let that pass. The country with a small number of civil machines would, under our hypothesis, be at a serious disadvantage compared with a country possessing a large commercial air fleet.

There is, of course, no absolute guarantee against this danger. But there are three ways of reducing it to a minimum and of preventing—what, after all, is the chief value of any disarmament treaty—the menace of sudden attack. These three methods, combined with the proposals I have made above, would in a sense conciliate the constructive elements in the Italian and the French theses at Geneva.

First of all, provisions against the conversion of civil machines, at least as precise and stringent as those forbidding the use of Red Cross ships, ambulances and hospitals for military purposes, would be embodied in a treaty, and the proposed Permanent Disarmament Commission, aided by air experts, would be there to see that the treaty was carried out and to investigate any alleged evasions of it. This, combined with the vigilance of pacific parliamentary forces within the State, would be no mean check upon preparations for using civilian machines, personnel and aerodromes for the forbidden purposes.

In the second place, there is much that could be done, both in the interests of commerce and for the convenience of travellers, and in the cause of preventing this particular danger, by developing the fellowship of the air. There is already a very high degree of camaraderie among airmen; there is also a very natural tendency of the commercial aviation firms to fret at the restrictions of frontiers. I believe it to be both possible and desirable, therefore, to internationalise civil aviation—at any rate commercial aviation. The French proposals to the Disarmament Conference have worked out in detail the way in which this unification might be effected. I will only say that I see no serious obstacle to making the personnel, landing grounds and machines used for the transport of passengers and goods subject to an International Board of Control, on which the principal governments and the Council of the League of Nations would be represented.

The third safeguard, which is also a not unnatural development of the principle of mutual assistance against aggression enshrined in the Covenant of the League of Nations, would be the creation of an international air force. Remember that, according to our scheme, no nation might possess organised bombing squadrons. The hypothesis that we have to consider is that one country, hopelessly committed, in spite of international remonstrance, mediation and arbitration, as well as the above safeguards, to a policy of military adventure—and no one with his eyes on the Far East will say that is impossible—might after a brief delay use its larger commercial aeroplanes to drop bombs on the cities of a neighbouring country. A powerful international force of fighting machines which could be rushed more swiftly than any army or navy to the assistance of the country attacked, and even of bombers to punish the aggressor on his own territory—this would be a formidable deterrent. Such a force might also be valuable in the establishment and patrolling of neutral zones between nations on the brink of war, and ultimately perhaps for the general purposes of an international police force.

On some such lines as these—in effect a combination of the French and Italian theses—I believe a solution of the air problem may be found, and I trust that it will be in this direction that future deliberations of the Conference will proceed.

THE PERILS OF SCIENCE

THE best news I have read for some time is the announcement that the recently invented silencer for firearms is not to be sold to the general public. This invention, we are told, can be fitted to a rifle, machine gun, or any small firearm, "eliminating smoke and flame as well as noise," and obviously, as the inventor declares, "it would make a firearm in the hands of a criminal a much greater menace." Hence the public is to be denied access to the latest fruits of scientific discovery.

To many people this will seem to be a particularly vicious kind of censorship or suppression, comparable to the burning of a book. To those who look at both sides of a question, or the other side, however, even so gross an infringement of human liberty as this will seem justifiable in the circumstances of to-day. A few old-fashioned people will even welcome it as a sign that the world is at last waking up to the fact that science, in spite of all that is commonly said in its praise, is about the most dangerous thing that has ever been loosed on mankind. Ruskin used to point this out to a deaf nineteenth century. He pointed out that the chemists, while they were saving lives with their right hands, were inventing preparations for the destruction of lives with their left. Without science there could have been none of the guns, none of the bombs, none of the poison gas, none of the submarines, none of the airships and aeroplanes by which men massacred each other so vigorously in the late war. To come down to smaller events, without science there could have been none of the weedkiller with which so many an unpleasant person has put a full stop to an unhappy marriage. Similarly, it is science that provides the coiner of money with the means of perpetrating his crime. It is science that supplies the motor-bandit with his car. Abolish science and its products, and the gangsters of America will be a helpless minority, incapable of wickedness even on a moderate scale.

In the nineteenth century it was a common enough thing to make a long list of the crimes associated with religion and to argue from this that religion had been a curse. And the sceptical had quotations in support of their case ranging from Lucretius to Ingersoll. I am not disposed to deny that religion is an exceedingly dangerous thing. Let a thoroughly bad man become religious without changing his nature, and there is no knowing what he will do. The Christian religion, at a first glance, looks the least likely thing in the world to turn a man's thoughts to crime. Yet human monsters inflamed by religion have again and again added some of the bloodiest chapters to the history of our race. Even good men with this dangerous weapon in their hands have committed enormities that one would think impossible except to devils. Many of the persecutors and witch-burners were admirable husbands and fathers. If they had been a little less religious they might have been worse husbands and fathers, but they would have been more comfortable fellow-citizens. All

these things prove, however, not that religion is an evil, but that, like science, it is dangerous in the wrong hands. Religion in itself is neither a good nor an evil thing. There are base religions as well as noble, and even the noblest can be called in to assist and endorse atrocities. The open Bible has been called the secret of England's greatness: it has also been the cause of a considerable amount of uncharitableness and skull-cracking.

If it is true that, for a considerable time, the Catholic Church did its best to keep the Bible out of the hands of the general public, it had good reason, it seems to me, for doing so. Human nature being what it is, it is clear that the Bible is a dangerous book to place in the hands of everybody. I was brought up to believe that the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Bible was due to its desire to keep the mass of people in ignorance. But I can see now that it arose from the same train of thought as has induced the inventor of the new silencer to withhold his instrument from sale to the general public. I trust that from this time onward a similar train of thought will become common in scientific circles. For the great problem of the hour is not how to spread scientific knowledge, but how to limit its extension so as to withhold it altogether from the bad citizen.

To do so will be repugnant to many of the best minds. But the alternative is a steady growth of gangsterdom. Because of this, it seems to me, there is no safe policy for any civilised state but the partial descientising of society. I should begin this process in the elementary schools. I do not know whether marks are still given for good conduct, but, if they are not, I should revive them, and I should not let a child even begin to learn arithmetic until it could show a clean sheet of good conduct for the previous twelve months. A thief who has never learned to count is unlikely ever to steal on a large scale. Similarly, as the time for initiation into each new branch of science approached, I would demand stiffer and stiffer tests of moral worth. He would have to be a very good boy, indeed, whom I would allow to learn algebra. As for physics, before I would allow any boy to be taught physics I would put him through as many tests as if he had applied for a post as a spy in the secret service. I would leave pound-notes lying about to see whether he would steal them. I would try to inveigle him into telling a lie. I would have him watched by detectives to see whether he smoked without his parents' consent. I would tell him ways by which he might cheat at an examination, and note whether this produced on his face an expression of delight or of disgust. If through all these tests he behaved like the worst of the pupils at Narkover, I should see to it that he was never permitted to study any more science for the rest of his life. If he came through triumphantly, on the other hand, I should give him a season ticket for the physics laboratory, and think out some severer tests for the time when he wished to study chemistry.

And this method of eliminating the unfit would go on right through the whole course of scientific education. Trigonometry and botany alike would be open only to the virtuous. For permission to study psychology, a certificate of something like sanctity would be required. Nor would I confine these tests merely to the students of science. I would make use of them also for sifting the right men to make use of scientific inventions. No man would be allowed to drive a motor car without a testimonial from a clergyman or the secretary of an ethical society. No man would be allowed to make munitions unless he could prove that he was a persistent pacifist. By this process of elimination we could get all the best men into the best jobs in the factories, and to be wicked and to be unskilled would be phrases denoting the same thing.

I can see only two objections that might be raised to these somewhat drastic proposals. One of these is that the best men morally are not always the men of greatest genius, and that by the severity of our tests we might lose the services of some potentially brilliant intellects. This objection might hold if it were proposed to set up similar tests in the sphere of the arts. Occasionally—though not so often some minor artists hope—a very bad citizen has become a very good artist. So far as I have read the lives of men of science, however, I gather that most of them were men of exceptionally fine character. I hold no brief for science—in fact, I am only beginning to like it—but I have an enormous admiration for the great men of science, who seem to me to have been for the most part a long line of Abraham Lincolns. I do not think the proposed tests would diminish in any way the amount of genius that would be devoted to science. They would probably increase it.

The second possible objection to the tests is that schoolboys, most of whom loathe arithmetic and algebra already, would be delighted at any excuse to escape learning them. To think so is to misunderstand human nature. I myself detested these subjects at school, but, if they had been forbidden or half-forbidden, how I should have toiled after virtue in order to be allowed to study them! Punctuality, obedience, legible handwriting—I should have acquired them all rather than be an outcast from the lovely world of forbidden knowledge. In the result—who knows?—I might have become an Einstein or a Jeans. I might even by this time have become famous as the inventor of a death-ray. By making science too accessible, we have made it seem unworthy of access to schoolboys. We have discouraged the young idealist and encouraged the motor-bandit. Let us, therefore, reverse our policy of popularising science while there is time—not to say, crime.

Y. Y.

ROAD HOGS

Millions get drunk on speed.—Y. Y.

THANK you, Y. Y.! When next I read
A pæan to "the lure of speed,"
Gladly shall I recall, and bless
Your strictures on "speed-drunkenness."
So far, so good; but all you said
Puts "dangerous thoughts" into my head.
You find it strange that fool or knave,
Untutored, ignorantly brave,
Can buy, for five poor shillings, power
To drive at sixty miles an hour.
Myself, I find it stranger still
That we demand no test of skill
From those who drive the State machine.
How many road-hogs have we seen,
Mad-drunk with speed, put on the pace
In Europe's international race!
O'ertaking, passing, cutting-in—
That's how, at bottom, wars begin.
How many a national hero shone
At the great game of "pushing-on,"
Till, in the end, his speedway-track
Proved nothing but a cul-de-sac!
To "get a move on"—that's the claim
Leaders like Hitler have to fame,
Praised by their followers for their dash
While blindly heading for a crash.
Turn to finance—I think you'll find
In Hatry's or in Kreuger's mind
The same wild passion nought can slake
But "risks no sober man would take."
Turn to—but no! we've said enough;
These thoughts, Y. Y., are perilous stuff.
Should we say more, we might blaspheme
The modern world's most sacred dream—
That "Progress" (which we all obey)
Means going faster every day,
No matter if we've lost the way.

MACFLECKNOE.

Correspondence

ECONOMIES IN EDUCATION

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—The *Times* last week in a leading article congratulated the L.C.C. on the lead it had given to the country in making an estimated saving on its educational services for 1932–33 of £1½ millions. But it is important to look into the matter more closely and realise what certain aspects of this "breathing space for consolidation" entail.

The Higher Education Committee of the L.C.C. a few days ago reconsidered and reaffirmed the previous decision that children leaving elementary schools at 14 should lose their present privilege of free admission for a year to Evening Institutes. The monetary saving involved is possibly £100 per annum; the saving on classes that fail to be formed owing to lack of numbers will probably be considerably higher. The proposed fees of 6d. per annum sound negligible, but there is very little doubt in the minds of those responsible for running Evening Institutes in the poorest areas that the imposition of practically any fee will keep out those children whose need of the classes is greatest. The question is not solely an economic one, although for many of these children 6d. equals half a day's wages or more; and board, lodging, fares, dinner money, clothes and extras do not leave many half-days' wages unemployed; but it is also a question of non-economic standards and values; and those who argue from money available for amusements to money potentially available for class fees, are quite out of touch with the realities of the situation.

The old slogan "we appreciate what we pay for" is sheer nonsense in this connection. The truth is we pay for what we appreciate, and how can we appreciate something not realised as worth having? The only hope for the Institutes, if they are to do the most valuable part of their work unhindered, is to be able to go out and do everything possible to persuade the child to come in, with no serious obstacle imposed in the way of his doing so. Then, when and if the child realises that the Institutes offer him something desirable, is the time appropriately to demand payment of fees.

It must be understood that in this type of Institute the aim is pre-eminently social, the united exercise of body and mind through physical exercises, drama and handwork. Although the strain imposed on the child by a sudden change at 14 from 27 hours a week in school to 48 or more at work is necessarily very great, yet we must realise that part of the strain comes from the forced inertia of body and mind which so often accompanies juvenile employment. The wild little crowds of adolescents who throng the streets of East London at night with no scope for their energies are directly produced by reaction from this difficult discipline of work, and practically the only outlets we have so far devised are in the activities of Scouts and Guides, voluntary clubs (frequently running L.C.C. classes to which the new rule will equally apply), and Junior Evening Institutes. The value and the need of this work has long since been placed beyond dispute, and to set against the saving of round about £100 the thought of the individual children who will inevitably face the problems of work, leisure and independence without such help, makes this economy seem the poor and mean thing that it is.

Is it too late to hope that the L.C.C. will reconsider its decision, and accord to school leavers for at least one term, if not a whole year, the chance of sampling the Institutes without payment?

Clubs and Institutes can, of course, only hope to enlist those children whose hours of work make attendance possible. They cannot touch the children working long hours in shops and "unregulated occupations," on whose behalf two separate amendments limiting hours to 48 a week were introduced in the Committee stage of the Children and Young Persons Bill last week and heavily defeated. EILEEN L. YOUNGHUSBAND.

SUNDAY CINEMAS

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—Mr. Lansbury claims that the Sunday cinema is at the moment indissolubly connected with hospital maintenance. Since the connection is factitious it cannot be permitted to corrupt one's judgment of the moral and mental tendency of the "pictures." The cinema is a retrograde influence, an insult to refinement and art, and out of harmony with the educational movements of the age. But Mr. Lansbury sees no impropriety in the proposal that governors of hospitals should enter into partnership, as it were, with those who make large profits out of the cinema vice. The bodies of patients are to be cared for at the expense of the souls of their fellows! The log-rolling of sectional interests inevitably compasses the betrayal of the welfare of the people as a whole.

Mr. Lansbury's compassion for the poor resembles that of an indulgent mother for an invalid child. He is satisfied that the cinema entertains the overworked, and he cannot be bothered with the question of its wholesomeness. He is still more indifferent to the preservation of Sunday as a bulwark of the nation's moral life. Yet it is monstrous that those who nobly and desperately try to counteract the lowering influences of the week should be impeded by Parliament's capricious anti-Sabbatic rogations.

Mr. Lansbury's weakness as a reformer is that he dispenses with the intellectual aids of the age. The light thrown on the conditions of human development by the artist, the psychologist, the religionist and the hygienist he is content to brush aside. But other reformers consult and respect these critics, and subject their advice to conscientious perpension in forming a decision whether an amusement imported from a quite different country and clime is suited to the direction it is desired to give to the minds of English youth. LINDSAY S. GARRETT.

17 Wakefield Street,
Regent Square, W.C.1.

O.T.C.s

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—In following the work of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, some of us view with a certain amount of misgiving the classification of weapons into "aggressive" weapons and others. It rather suggests the old fallacy that there are bad wars and not-so-bad wars. But the classification of weapons on certain lines serves a useful purpose if it reminds us of the measures of disarmament that were imposed upon Germany on the understanding that they were the pattern and precursor of a general disarmament. One such measure deserves more attention than it has received in this connection.

Under Art. 177 of the Treaty of Versailles it was laid down for "Germany: Educational establishments, the universities . . . associations of every description . . . must not occupy themselves with military matters. In particular they will be forbidden to instruct or exercise their members . . . in the profession or use of arms. . . . These societies, associations, educational establishments and universities must have no connection with the Ministries of War or any other military authority."

During the war years, and after, there was a very common belief in this country that the military spirit of Prussia had its root and strength in this regimentation of the adolescent mind in the ways of war. Yet to-day, in our own schools, O.T.C.s and cadet corps are the rule rather than the exception. In the name of equity, as well as sanity, should not one of our first measures of disarmament be to disarm our boys?

24 Haling Park Road, BARBARA DUNCAN HARRIS.
South Croydon.

FICTION AND THE READING PUBLIC

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—The amount of space you have given to Mr. Sadleir's review of my book, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, suggests that I may perhaps claim a few lines in which to defend myself.

I find it gratifying that Mr. Sadleir, having conducted a search for errors, can produce only misapprehensions and misrepresentations of his own. Yet it is hard to be attacked both for not having done what one did not set out to do, and for not having done what one actually has done. "But what," he asks, "have the preferences of a rather pharasaical minority to do with the history of the best-seller? And what if these preferences themselves be challenged?" In the first place, I cannot honestly pretend to think it my fault that he misapprehended my undertaking. My object (stated at some length in the introduction and reiterated throughout the book) was not to write "the history of the best-seller," but, by using popular fiction as an index of the level of taste at a given period, to ascertain how our age compares with others in so vital a matter as reading capacity and how far this may be dependent on cultural environment. I particularly resent the suggestion that I have revelled in a "massacre" of best-sellers, since I was at great pains to devise a method for my study that should make the nature of my approach perfectly plain and give something of impersonality to my judgments. And then, in the second place, Mr. Sadleir's

sneer about "preferences" amounts to misrepresentation. Who would gather from him that the very structure of my book was explicitly dictated by my concern to answer his first question, and that the last third of it was devoted to showing in detail, by analysis, why one novel can be said to be "better" than another and why one kind of reading is less desirable than another?—but Mr. Sadleir perhaps never got so far, for he doesn't mention it at all.

It seems necessary to point out that I was not engaged in writing a history of publishing; anyone wanting the facts about cheap editions that Mr. Sadleir flourishes would naturally look for them in the obvious places, but for my purpose the trade of publishing is of no interest except as its developments affect literature by threatening taste, deflecting the use of talent, and so on. With such developments I have tried to deal, and from this point of view railway libraries and yellow-backs are for my purpose important facts while editions of a well-established kind of fiction are not. Thus my analysis of the sales of *Pelham* after 1853 was to show the size of the new public these editions tapped.

To deal with another of his points (it would be easy to deal with them all), G. W. M. Reynolds is discussed at some length (pp. 175–7); if, after reading these pages, in which I suggest the difference between Reynolds, the dead end of the Radclyffe kind of fiction, and Lytton, the first of the new "best-sellers," Mr. Sadleir still thinks he can trace a continuity of tone and use of language from Mrs. Radclyffe to *The Sheik* (his case seems to rest on naive classification by "subject-matter"), he is, of course, entitled to his opinion, but he really shouldn't assert it as a *fact* that had escaped me. And I think I am entitled to suggest that the adroitness with which he wrests quotations from their context is not from every point of view admirable.

Perhaps I may further point out that Mr. Sadleir's reaction to my study I had already allowed for (*v.* pp. 208 and 271). Those of us who, not being publishers, can afford to cherish a disinterested concern for literary standards, would prefer THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION (which is, after all, one of the few places where one can still look for genuine criticism—or, as Mr. Sadleir would say, "the preference of a rather pharasaical minority") not to lend itself to gross anti-highbrow prejudice.

6 Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge. Q. D. LEAVIS.

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—Mr. Sadleir's attitude to Mrs. Leavis's book, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, seems based on a misunderstanding of the author's intention. So far as my reading of the book goes, it is not primarily a history of the best-seller, but an examination of typical best-sellers to be used as an index of the cultural level of classes and ages. It is not in dispute that the bulk of modern fiction is worthless when it is not vicious (as strengthening herd prejudice, supporting false values in living, sanding up the channels of genuine feeling). In an admirable historical section Mrs. Leavis reminds us that it was not always so, and her subsequent survey of modern best-sellers (ranging from *Life—and Erica* to the "literary" success) is directed by her belief—to which Mr. Sadleir's cooler perceptions must subscribe—that the effort required to read and enjoy the best (given willingly when only the best was available) is not now being made except by a dangerously small minority—a minority so small that it does not offer adequate support to any writer too difficult, too uncompromising, or too destructive of accepted values. In short, the existence of several cultural levels, with fiction to match, threatens the highest level with death from suffocation or starvation, the nature of man being such that he will accept his thought and his spiritual and emotional satisfactions from an easier rather than a harder source, even at the cost of getting an inferior article. A society which is continually spoon-fed by authors whose intelligence and capacity for feeling are only on the level of their readers must lose its teeth for biting on hard food.

The section in which Mrs. Leavis argues this conclusion cannot justly be labelled "the fervent propaganda of a minority enthusiast." She has said only what is hard, true, and disturbing to the complacence both of the readers and writers of "literary" novels (of me, too). There is a great deal more than this in her book, a copy of which ought to be given, by a parent or guardian, to every young man or woman who is learning to write. Among other things they may discover which words, once reputable, have been ruined by the company they keep.

Mooredge, Whitby, Yorkshire. STORM JAMESON.

THE PROJECTION OF ENGLAND

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—No one is likely to disagree with Sir Stephen Tallents when he urges, in his new book, *The Projection of England*, that English ideals should be made known to the world by means of the screen no less than in other ways. The problem is one not of aim, but of method—how can this desirable "projection" be brought about? Not, as I see it, without certain radical alterations in the policy of our producing companies. During the last few months, something like 250 new films have been shown in London. Of these, 66 have reached a fairly high standard of merit; 16 have been first-class. Of the 66 good films, 43 are American; 15 British; and 8 German, French or Russian. Of the 16 first-class ones, 8 are American; 2 British; and 6 Continental. Of the 15 British films, 6 were made in this country by American organisations. Thus, no more than 9, or *less than a seventh* of all the reasonably good new films of the last few months, can be legitimately described as British-made productions. Lately, it is true, our studios have to some extent shaken themselves free from their long-enduring tendency merely to copy the technique of Hollywood—but only, instead, to start copying those of the Continent. The one solitary British-made picture among the first 16 to which I have referred, is there, not because of any originality of its own, but because its director has made a partially successful attempt to apply René Clair's methods in a British studio. The most commercially successful British film of the moment is a pale reflection of the genius of a German director, Erik Charell.

A film director of talent but no great originality does well to allow himself to be influenced by those few who possess real creative genius. But what this country needs is not directors of talent, but directors who have themselves original minds—and the self-confidence to use them. We have the actors; we have the authors; we have the technical equipment; we we have the scenery; we have all manner of subjects—social, industrial, scientific—of which the screen has hardly begun to make use; all we lack is the creative intelligence to make this or that synthesis of these rich resources, and to give it life. The best piece of news of the last few weeks has been the appointment by one of our leading companies of a producer-in-chief, one of whose main functions (as that of Herr Pommer in Germany) is to look out for and encourage young men or women, one of whom may develop into an English Chaplin, an English Clair or an English Pabst.

The extent to which British films can successfully project English ideas to the world at large depends on one thing only—*their intrinsic merit*. It is important to remember that, as in other forms of art, that merit is unlikely to be achieved, may, in fact, be rendered less achievable, by their setting out to be self-consciously propagandist. The only way British films, no less than British painting, British music or British drama, can be the means of spreading British ideas throughout the world is for them to be so good that the world cannot do without them.

Kingsway House, W.C.2. WALTER ASHLEY.

THE ARISTOCRATIC EMBRACE

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—In other days all persons of good will were welcomed into the Labour Party, the only condition being that they were "workers with hand or brain." Now another condition is to be added—the test of the Boiled Shirt, and every shirt contains a black ball.

Whatever may be the difference of opinion as to the composition of the present Government, it is surely a formula of government that it should be National. Therefore it must contain at least three sorts of people:

(a) Those who habitually wear boiled shirts;
(b) Those who occasionally wear them, and
(c) Those who never do.

The founders of the Party had not this "class consciousness" or "inferiority complex." Keir Hardie had clear-sightedness and tolerance. He wrote: "To claim for the Socialist movement that it is dependent for its success upon 'class consciousness' of one section of the Community is doing Socialism an injustice and indefinitely postponing its triumphs."

We are all rentiers now, as the last election proved. It is a matter of degree until the day comes when private property and profit are abolished. In the meantime surely all of good will, "workers by hand or brain," should be encouraged to join

the Labour Party without at the frontier meeting an examination of their pockets and their wardrobe. At least let us retain one sense of humour, because there are two types of snob: the snob who pretends to be better off than he is, and the other, not perhaps any the more agreeable, who pretends to be worse off.

Savage Club, W.C.1. J. P. BLAKE.

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

Sir,—Except Mr. Birrell, your correspondents on the subject of the Prime Minister's social behaviour all display that puritanism of shabbiness which I, and I think others like me, find specially unattractive in the Labour Party. None of them has ventured to suggest that the society of marquises and the comfort of their houses are not on the whole more agreeable than what can be offered by the humble local workers in the Party; none has suggested that court dress is not more beautiful than what most of us usually wear, nor that the manners of a court are not politer than those of a mine. To me, and I think to others, comfort, beauty, and manners seem to be things specially worth having, and our sympathy is alienated by those who reject them as something unclean. AUSTIN DUNCAN-JONES.

University College, Southampton.

ART. 231

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—I should not have commented further on Professor Temperley's letter except for his assumption that I have not read the documents associated with the Treaty of Versailles, or even the Treaty itself! It was because I had done so that I was not deceived by Mr. Lloyd George's inadequate references, and was able to detect the flaw in Professor Temperley's criticism of Archbishop Temple's references to the war guilt section, Article 231. The argument of the Archbishop, as set out in the *Berliner Monatshefte* of March, is directed to the importance of obtaining a cancellation of that particular article, as being the legal repository of the principle of war guilt.

It is a novel feature in treaties to impose such an admission on the defeated: Herklets Collection is silent for a precedent.

I adopt Mr. Jerrold's analogy on the principle of duress: "If my creditor forces a cheque out of me at the point of a revolver, I can honourably stop it at a bank. If the County Court decides against me, I must pay." The Allies forced a blank cheque, according to Mr. Lloyd George, a cheque on account up to 24,000,000,000 golden marks, according to the Treaty, at the point of the blockade; on Mr. Jerrold's argument Germany can honourably stop payment.

I only protested against all the humbug about the "sacred character of the Treaty of Versailles." That instrument was an embodiment of four years' accumulated venom of the non-combatant elements in the Allied States. The theory that the State, in its public capacity, can ordain, when convenient, what to the citizen is forbidden is wholly repugnant to the maintenance of any ordered society. It is a pity, however, that Professor Temperley has not studied a little English official publication entitled *Hostilities Without Declaration of War*.

74 Belsize Park Gardens, London, N.W.3. C. H. NORMAN.

[This correspondence is now closed.—Ed. *N. S. & N.*]

THE PATENT MEDICINE SCANDAL

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—As a pharmacist I endorse every word of Dr. Harry Roberts's timely article. May I refer to a scandal with which he does not deal?

Those of us who hate the quack-medicine trade used to rejoice in the taxation which is compulsory in the form of stamp duty. But now the Exchequer is losing much money annually through a "wangle" which the makers of patent medicines have been quick to seize upon. If you print the formula on the label no duty is payable. A needlessly long formula is devised with small percentages of foreign substances and every item is expressed in the longest word to be found in a chemical dictionary. For example, antipyrin never appears under that name, but always as phenyldimethyl—iso-pyrazolone.

They order these things better in France. The difficulty in England is this. The profits in quack remedies are enormous and advertising charges on the grand scale "are but lightly borne." Our newspapers are, therefore, important beneficiaries in drawing a large advertisement revenue and their influence is likely to remain on the side of the perpetuation of the Patent Medicine Scandal. R. CECIL OWEN.

Chester.

Miscellany

SPRING IN THE PENNINES

NOW the Spring comes.
Brightly and whitely she comes—
Sun and snow, frost and rain,
And the sun again,
The wild Spring.

But she comes,
And the snipe drums;
And the lark soars.
She comes.

Gladness and Folly,
And then melancholy.
Madness, sadness, and hope,
And then joy.
She comes.

So now all birds sing,
"Ting-a-ling, ching-ching,
No need for crumbs.
She comes."

On hills of peat
The lambs bleat;
And down in the glen
The beck hums
And the trout leap.

The rain strums
With silver thumbs
On the lyre of the trees;
And all birds sing
"Ting-a-ling, ching-ching,
How sweet is Spring!"

HERBERT E. PALMER.

SCIENCE AND POLITICS

WINGS over Europe, a play by Robert Nichols and Maurice Browne (I expect the poet had the greater share in it) was performed with success by the New York Theatre Guild as long ago as December, 1928. It is to be seen now at the Globe Theatre, well acted, remarkably well acted. The play's success depends upon the idealism and tense excitement of the young physicist, Francis Lightfoot, carrying conviction. As a type, he resembles no man of science I have met, but that is neither here nor there, provided that the character is sufficiently convincing on the stage to sustain the dramatic situation. That situation is a tremendous one, and if dramatic situations were measurable by their implications, it might be said that no larger issue has ever been projected upon the stage: in the play the existence of humanity and of the earth itself is at stake.

A young physicist of twenty-five, after working from boyhood in complete isolation, but with all the appliances which money can provide, has, when the curtain rises, discovered how to release the energy in the atom. He happens, also, to be a nephew of the Prime Minister, who is convinced of the

genuineness of his nephew's claim. He has summoned a Committee of the Cabinet to consider how this civilisation-shaking discovery can be handled so as to avoid unimaginable disasters. To Lightfoot the new knowledge which he has brought into the world is the charter of man's freedom from toil. He is in a state of rapt disinterested exaltation, and, being simple-minded, pure in heart, and utterly ignorant of human nature and the structure of society, he supposes that a body of statesmen have only to put their heads together for a couple of weeks or so in order to establish a millennium. Shelley appears to be the only writer whom he has read, or, at any rate, the only writer who has made any impression on him; consequently, however masterful he may be in his laboratory, he is at a disadvantage in Downing Street. On one point he is determined: the fruits of his discovery shall be the property of all mankind, and never be exploited either by a nation or a class. The character of Lightfoot is excellently designed to bring out comedy in a clash between one who has vision but no common sense and those who have common sense but no vision; and when the point at issue between them is the alternative of world-destruction or the foundation of a care-free existence for all men, that comedy, as may be imagined, ranges between laughter at the inadequacy of men to their opportunities and disturbing satire. Mr. Francis James sustains the part of Lightfoot with vivid energy. He is an exasperating young man of the " crystal-clear crank " type.

The Cabinet is in council throughout the play. In the first act they are naturally incredulous, and their incredulity is confirmed by Lightfoot's injudicious arrogance and confused excitement. However, Evelyn Arthur, a suave philosophic politician (suggested, perhaps, by the late Lord Balfour), with the help of the Prime Minister, convinces them that the matter must be gone into and they adjourn for a week. Lightfoot agrees to impart his discovery to no one else meanwhile. " I have called on you to build a House for Man. The responsibility is yours."

When we see them again they have witnessed demonstrations which convince them that they are up against facts which will entirely disorganise civilisation, and their interim consultations have also brought them to the conclusion that Lightfoot must be persuaded to make no use of his discovery. In fact, the majority of the Cabinet are now in such a state of alarm that they pass a resolution that if Lightfoot does not consent to destroy his secret he must be shut up. To the Prime Minister's surprise, Evelyn Arthur is one of those who vote for this extreme measure. He foresees that they will not succeed in persuading the impassioned young man to abandon his discovery. Sure enough, faced with their decision, Lightfoot proceeds to threats. " Last week," he says, " I came here—a boy full of hope; to-day I am a man, whose despair almost equals your own. Last week my brain knew, though my heart refused to believe, your wickedness. And I made my preparations.... Aren't I to be shot at dawn? or buried alive? Understand this: either, by noon to-morrow, you will be prepared to formulate under my supervision a constructive programme satisfactory to me, or at one o'clock to-morrow England ends." (Uproar.) " Where this island was will be a whirlpool of disintegrated atoms." If any steps are taken against him meanwhile, the catastrophe will instantly take place.

The Committee assemble next day in profound depression; Lightfoot enters haggard and tense. The last few hours have brought him one further revelation—that " Man has not sufficiently evolved to bear the burden of his destiny." These words move Evelyn Arthur profoundly, and provoke him into speaking what is the nearest approach to a moral of the play: that it is no use hoping much from men, and that the House of Man can only be built by those who are aware of that. To this Lightfoot responds with a tirade expressing a faith in Nature which exceeds faith in the destiny of mankind. Nature is inexhaustible, and since mankind has not succeeded in evolving a religious sense adequate to directing their power over Nature, it is a matter of little consequence if the earth is dissolved: if man has been a failure, Nature will start her great experiment elsewhere. When the clock strikes twelve Lightfoot will destroy the earth. " Our midget has spun long enough, I give it fifteen minutes more—fifteen minutes for you to come to terms with your gods." He will come back a minute or two before noon, and face annihilation with them.

There is plenty of dramatic suspense in the scene which follows, and the different reactions of the different characters to the situation are interesting enough to hold our attention. One Cabinet Minister is resolved upon action. The Secretary for War has provided himself with a revolver, and he has divined that Lightfoot carries on him the instrument which will start the disintegration of matter. The Secretary for War's philosophy is that man has always been the slave of force, and he intends to shoot Lightfoot the moment he enters the room. They wait for his return; he fires and Lightfoot collapses. Laid on the table, Lightfoot murmurs Maxwell's formulation of the theory of light, and is seen apparently fingering a small watch-like instrument, but it falls from his dying hand before he can set the control in motion. Evelyn Arthur snatches it, and Lightfoot, who thinks he has set the process in motion, dies with the words: " We go to the Eternal Mind." A little agitated chatter follows which is intended to make the ingenious mechanism seem plausible, when a message is brought in to the Prime Minister, informing him that the control of the atom has also been discovered in Yugoslavia, and that the Cabinets of all the nations are summoned to consultation by the Gild of United Scientists of the World. The letter also informs him that at the same moment aeroplanes capable of dropping atomic bombs will appear in every capital in Europe—and sure enough we hear them. There is no stopping the advance of science, however embarrassing its discoveries may be to civilisation and human happiness. Evelyn Arthur rushes from the room with Lightfoot's control in his waistcoat pocket to attend the conference.

It has been necessary to deal in some detail with the ideas in this play to explain how it is that three acts of discussion succeed in holding our attention. The character-drawing is, in passages, crude, and occasionally the scene before us is insufficiently realistic. Nevertheless, tension holds the play together, and, thanks to the adequate acting of all the politicians, and the really successful intensity with which Mr. Francis James impersonates the exasperating poet-scientist, this ambitious play attains its mark.

A few days after it started at the Globe Theatre two young physicists at Cambridge, one under thirty years of age, and the other thirty-four, announced that they had made a most important advance towards man's control of latent atomic energy. " For the first time in history," writes Sir Leonard Hill, commenting on their work, " we have got more energy out of something than we put into it," and Lord Rutherford lends the weight of his authority to the statement that they have discovered " new and powerful methods of tackling the problem of how atoms are split up." Whether, as the play suggests, such discoveries involve the power to unrip the texture of the globe is a point on which neither of them would probably pronounce an opinion, but it looks as though we might soon be faced by problems not different in kind from those which the Cabinet on the stage of the Globe Theatre fails so humiliatingly to solve. *Wings over Europe* is a vigorous play which deals with a matter of vital interest to the world. The destiny of mankind has slipped (we are all aware of it) from the hands of politicians into the hands of scientists, who know not what they do, but pass responsibility for results on to those whose sense of proportion and knowledge are inadequate to the situations created by science. The value of this play lies in the vigour and humour with which it deals with this fundamental predicament of civilisation.

DESMOND MACCARTHY.

OUR DEBT TO FRANCE

RIALTO THEATRE (from Sunday) : Henry Garat in *Il est Charmant* (Paramount. French).

THE Rialto Theatre this week replaces its Réné Clair bill with another French musical comedy. Obviously the London public, having once tasted French blood, will not be fobbed off with anything else. It is good that this should be the case. For the French film producers were the first people, without pretensions to being *avant-garde*, to cut with all the nonsense thought to be essential for a successful movie, a heavy emotionalism of treatment, a continual appeal to a treacly sentimentality, a never-failing gravity about the emotional complications of uncomplicated people, a vast effort to " grapple with life." It was thought fatal to introduce what was called " sophistication." Finally the word " sophistication " was given a special meaning in film vocabulary. It was used in reference to a certain type of " society drama " in which all the leading ladies took all their little troubles with a huge pomposity. Yet to assume that you are the most important person in the world, that it is an outrage you should be bored with your husband and that no one has ever been so unhappy before as you are now, is the very reverse of " sophistication." For a sophisticated person is, like Uncle Matthew, " never quite serious." He sees the comedy of himself even at the moments when he is most unhappy.

I should say that sophistication is a state of mind almost completely unknown in the United States, as it is unknown in the nursery. And as long as Hollywood dominated the films it was inevitably unknown in the picture-house. But the moment that the French began going in seriously for picture-making the childish gravity of Hollywood was bound to receive a severe shock. The great moral achievement of Clair, perhaps, has been to knock moralising out of the pictures, to take life for granted, and to play tricks with it.

Il est Charmant is charming, like Henry Garat in whose honour the theme song is sung. The director, Louis Mercanton, is evidently a man of much humour and immense ingenuity. The number of amusing little pictorial jokes of which he continues to think, in the course of this picture, is amazing. There is an easily born mastery of his intellectual material which appeals to the intelligence of the onlooker. All the time you are aware that you are looking at a picture intended for grown-up people. The picture is continually gay, but it is gay with the gaiety of people who realise that, after all, life itself is a bit of a farce. Inevitably much modern cinema work is a skit on Hollywood, and *Il est Charmant* is no exception to the rule. Mercanton takes a lot of Hollywood themes, evening parties, Tiller Girls, Folies Bergères, and turns them topsy-turvy. One of the great merits of the movie is that it can exploit incongruity to the fullest extent; that it can beat through the realistic shackles of time and space, alter its speed at every moment, and utilise everything for the wrong purpose. There is one passage in *Il est Charmant*, when some busts of eminent departed legists suddenly break into speech, which is a very good example of what I mean. Mercanton can laugh visually at everything. By a change of *tempo* the musical pace can suddenly take on the gravity of a Gregorian chant, the reception at an absurd evening party the reverential weight of a royal drawing-room. Above all, he is not frightened of going at the proper pace, for fear that we shall miss something. He does not find it necessary to overstress his points, as Lubitsch does when working for Hollywood. The French film has stepped straight into a tradition, the tradition of the French comic stage, which gives the public the credit of not being a complete ass, which is willing to treat you as man to man. And as we generally respond almost automatically to the treatment we receive, we get roughly some five grades more intelligent when we are seeing a picture like *Il est Charmant*. I do not mean for a moment that *Il est Charmant* is a work of sublime genius. There may be nothing in it that is emphatically new. Perhaps *Palmy Days* was in a manner more original. You might even say that it was made to a recipe. But the recipe is a good recipe and the dishes have been properly flavoured. Hence you rise from dinner with a feeling of well-being and the certainty that you will not be troubled with indigestion at night.

FRANCIS BIRRELL.

LASCIATE SPERANZA

Again the years revolving, genial May
To all the Art World brings the Opening Day,
Once more the Exhibition time comes round,
And as before exactly things are found.

THUS wrote the anonymous author of *A Rap at the R.A.*, in 1875, and present-day criticism has really nothing to add. The names of the pictures, and of some of the painters, are different, but the exhibition remains substantially the same. If a few works of the earlier period were brought down from the Diploma Galleries and hung on the walls to-day they would not appear anachronisms; they would be rather refreshing. The only change is that fifty years ago the Academy did represent most of the art that the country was producing, while now it merely represents itself.

It is interesting to note, however, that " the picture of the year " is an exception to this rule. Mr. Sickert's magnificent *Raising of Lazarus* is certainly not in the general run of Academy pictures. Neither is his *Bath the Sublime*, one of those landscapes which this year form the predominating type of exhibit. Sham antiques, compounded from Constable and Crome, admirably suited to go with suites of faked furniture, are the Academicians' current mass-production, though a good many interior pictures are also included in the 1932 models. Excepting for a few pirates and an occasional *Judgment of Paris* there is a slump in the subject picture, as though the hanging committee had become modernised to the extent of preferring to be dull rather than to be literary. But Mr. Spenceleugh, with *Sure to Catch*, continues to champion this form with wit and ability; Mr. Gunn's conversation piece of Messrs. Baring, Belloc and Chesterton is altogether successful; and *Companions in Solitude*, the careful little still-life of Mr. Dumont-Smith, Junior, compels respect for its workmanship.

The pictures for the Bank of England, on the other hand, are tragic examples of missed opportunity. It is the kind of job that is looked upon as the Academy's especial function, and it has been abominably bungled. In their unfortunate attempt at unity in the pictures taken as a whole, the various artists have simply painted down to their lowest common factor of accomplishment. They have produced something which has neither life nor colour nor credibility, and which would be a failure even as a tailor's advertisement. The late Sir William Orpen's precocious pastiche *The Play Scene from " Hamlet "* is incomparably better as an exercise in the grand manner. It is a tremendous crib, but it does carry conviction, while the Bank pictures only illustrate the dullness of virtue without virtuosity.

To find a reason for the general tedium of this year's Academy we must turn to the speech of Field-Marshal Sir George Milne at the Academy banquet. At this function members of different professions and representatives of opposing parties have the luxury of burying the tomahawk while continuing to grind the axe. " I hope," said the gallant Field-Marshal, " that when Geneva has finally abolished the so-called ' abominable weapons of destruction,' we may again see on these walls the stirring pictures of sea fights and land battles which stirred our blood in our youth."

Now we know what has happened. The Academy has given the world a lead; the Academy, for the moment, has disarmed.

T. W. EARP.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

The Merchant of Venice

WHATEVER Shakespeare's intentions with *The Merchant of Venice*, I doubt whether Mr. Ernest Milton's ennobled Shylock, at the St. James's Theatre, can be regarded as a "faithful" presentation of them. Yet the production, judged on its own postulates, must be accounted a reasonably successful one. There were, alas, the usual distresses. Sixteenth-century Venice, inevitably, was given Elizabethan domestic architecture in an advanced stage of disrepair, and the sixteenth-century Venetians gesticulated from the shoulder in dog-like fidelity to the Lyceum tradition. Miss Mary Newcomb is, perhaps, a portent. By treating her blank verse as though it were "sensible" prose she contrived to give Portia a reality which she has often lacked. Mr. Milton's aims were different. He is capable of the headlong passion which sweeps away the critical interpolation, and there are moments when his mannerisms are forgotten. His long-drawn-out final exit is completely effective in its melodramatic context, and he displays the logic of the part at white heat.

A Film Lecture on Russia

The Five Year Plan at the Forum (Villiers Street) has more documentary than entertainment value. However, the intelligent visitor will see many interesting photographs of natural scenery, new buildings, factory constructions, etc. At the end one has really learnt something, though the result has been rather fatiguing. The picture would have value for anyone contemplating a visit to Russia. The American lecturer does his business well on the whole, though he shoots at one's head rather too many tendencious statistics and seems more anxious to boom American exports than to interest us in the Russian achievement itself.

Comedy at the Apollo

Pleasure Cruise has all the virtues of a successful light comedy, and at least a few of the attributes of a good one. Mr. Owen Nares is good precisely because the author has given him an opportunity of using his mannerisms rather than his humanity. Miss Madeleine Carroll, on the other hand, whose mannerisms are more marked and of narrower scope, has to impose them on an unsuitable part, and is comparatively helpless. Another cause of success is the use of vaguely familiar sentiments and situations. There is not too much invention, and the sources of inspiration seem to be anything from *The Merchant of Venice* to *Vile Bodies*. The result of this is that the play, while being highly unoriginal, is not merely another rehash of fashionable tricks, though it is seasoned with fashionable morals. Such a method of comedy writing may compare unfavourably with that of an inventive talent such as Mr. Noel Coward's, but it is a diverting substitute, and responsible here for much good humour.

True Love.

The story of the simple little manicurist who is fascinated by a rich and immoral business man, but finally—sometimes by reason of her own intelligence and virtue, but more often because fate is on her side—rejects his offer of a luxurious life of sin and returns to her faithful wireless mechanic, which has been almost the only subject of newspaper serials for many years, now makes its appearance on the stage of the Comedy Theatre—in *Faces*, by Mr. Ludlow and Mr. Sondes. The opening scene of *Faces* is a beauty parlour and when, in the first quarter of an hour, the audience was told that Maddy Pelham (Jane Baxter—and the very simplest little manicurist we have ever seen) is in love with a mysterious married man and is about to jilt her honest Ted in consequence, that one of Maddy's regular customers suspects her husband of infidelity, and that another (heavily labelled "Warning" from almost her first speech) is about to be abandoned by her lover, who is returning, after ten years, to his wife, it was so evident how these loaded dice would fall that the only hope of amusement or surprise lay in the dialogue. Unfortunately, this is as poor and obvious as the plot, for all the characters are so painstakingly typical of one thing or another that they are always over-reaching themselves, and individuality and life-likeness are sacrificed to make a not very good joke.

The Real Mr. Masefield

The revival at the Embassy of *The Tragedy of Nan* recalls to us a different Mr. Masefield. There is a lyrical quality about the play which leaves one with the regretful feeling that if only its author had written more of his poetry in the strain of his prose, it would have been much more moving. Time has not withered the beauty of his language nor detracted from the emotional power of his theme. In his story of the young woman defeated by environment, he achieved the universal. One watches the tragedy of Nan, implicit in her character and circumstance, draw on to its inevitable conclusion. Like the heroine of a Greek drama, she struggles beneath a brooding and inescapable fate. She is bound to love, bound to be deceived. The symbolism of the rising tide and the wanderings of the mad old fiddler, mourning for his white flower, serve both to heighten the effect of cumulative sadness and to foreshadow the end. Mr. Masefield's language carries one beyond the written word into the spirit of his people and his countryside. It cannot easily be misinterpreted. To the Nan starved for happiness, surprised by joy, Miss Joyce Bland gives all the poetic loveliness intended. It is in the scenes of desertion and revenge which call for more powerful acting that she is unequal to the part. Mr. T. G. Saville rightly makes the lover one whose weakness is the more criminal because he has a true vision of the beautiful. As Gaffer Pearce, Mr. Christopher Hodge catches the right note of prophecy and resignation. One regrets that the guests at the evening party were allowed to be so unlife-like. It is this lack of finish which tends to make a performance at the Embassy just not quite good enough.

Things to see and hear in the coming week:

Friday, May 6th—
Miss Beryl M. le P. Power on "Indian Labour Conditions," Royal Society of Arts, 4.30.
"Man Overboard," Garrick.

Sunday, May 8th—
C. Delisle Burns on "Mechanism and the Arts," Conway Hall, 11.
"Mistigri," The Film Society, Tivoli Cinema, 2.30.
"Common Folk," Savoy.

Monday, May 9th—
Non-stop Variety, Pavilion.

Tuesday, May 10th—
B. F. Czarnomski on "The Place of Poland in Europe To-day," Friends House, 1.20.
Ruth Draper, Savoy Theatre Matinée in aid of the Caldecott Community.
D'Alvarez, Wigmore Hall, 8.30.
"Not so Green," Ambassadors.

Wednesday, May 11th—
W. M. Citrine on "The Dangers of Rationalisation," London School of Economics, 5.30.
Cedric Belfrage on "The Cinema," B.B.C., 6.50.
"Somebody Knows," St. Martin's.
"The Jack Pot," Prince of Wales.

Thursday, May 12th—
Harpsichord and London String Players Recital, Conductor, Herbert Menges, Wigmore Hall, 8.30.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE great mistake of all artists who claim to be specifically naturalistic is to believe that there is such a thing as a plain fact, and that some facts are plainer than others. A fact, directly it has been observed, becomes a fancy, even to a mathematician; and the human mind cannot progress except by fancy. It is the business of the artist either to recognise his fancies for what they are, as for instance Lewis Carroll did, and Pope; or to bring them under the sway of the imagination. Fancy can, if it pleases, remain content with its play around the observed fact: imagination goes beyond the fact, recognising it not only as an occasion for invention but as a vehicle of truth. It is no use being unduly harsh to those who love and are skilful in fancy, unless indeed they claim for the results of their fancy the praise which belongs only to the fruits of imagination. The recent modern attack on popular fiction is fundamentally an attack on fancy. Fancy is the mother of invention, in which our popular novelists are prolific; imagination is creative, producing people and circumstance which in the world's mind become of equal validity with the people and circumstance of history. Ultimately there is no other test of an artist's greatness than this power to create living forms that become sooner or later standards by which we judge the world of actual men and things. Authors who have this imaginative power at its highest are rarely, in their lifetime, the most popular or the most esteemed, unless they join to this gift a genius for the comic. The world of Dostoevsky is oppressive compared to the world of Dumas. Those who prefer the higher and more difficult things in art will be regarded as offensively superior, and I do not see how this is to be helped. A man who has trained his critical intelligence cannot help knowing that he is superior to one who has remained naive—all he can do, to avoid the penalities due to pride, is to refrain from swanking about it. What he must not do is to get careless in judgment, or snobbish, or merely capricious. There are people to-day who refuse to find any merit in any novelists except Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Wodehouse (our two abstract authors), or Mr. Edgar Wallace and Mr. Lionel Brittain (our two proletarians); there are others who believe that to dislike *The Good Companions* is to dislike life; others who believe that no good novels can be written in any language but French; others who proclaim that the only good novels are written in a tongue no man can read. I still obstinately cling to the old-fashioned conviction that only that is a great novel in which the author has allowed fancy to play on fact, and then referred the result to the creative intelligence of the imagination. And this week I welcome a novel which triumphantly accomplishes this desired end of all fiction—Miss Hilda Vaughan's *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.).

* * *

This fifth novel of Miss Vaughan's is a much severer book than her previous stories; and because of its plainness, its apparent adherence to a less romantic standard than that under which she has hitherto appeared, her very great imaginative qualities are the more conspicuous. Abundance of fancy, fertility of invention, sheer gusto have often in the past, as to-day, disguised a complete lack of imaginative power. Critics, grown suspicious of fancy and invention, often fail to recognise great imagination when it is so accompanied, and in the past I do not think justice has been done to Miss Vaughan's novels. In *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman* her gravity of mind, her preoccupation with the more ironic and pitiful aspects of human relationships, her cool, controlled insight into human motives, the sweetness and sanity of a wisdom that knows its own capacity for folly and will not be deflected, unless consciously, by caprice, a love for tradition which can afford to be earth-bound because it is heaven-aspiring—all these are displayed in the telling of a story as simple as a tale in the *Decameron*. How satisfying it is to read a novel in which the author's primary desire is not to be bright or terrific or *fin-de-minuit* or Da-da, but to tell us a story. The beginning of the book, where Dickie Einon-Thomas is introduced to the estate he has inherited so unexpectedly, sets the key for the whole story. The land. The tradition of the family. Dickie's suburban individualist greed. Gwenllian's ardent pride and territorial dignity. The clash between Dickie—Welsh only by descent—and the strange, primitive, possessive people among whom he is doomed to struggle and to die.

* * *

Gwenllian Einon-Thomas has lived all her life at Plâs Einon: the slave, but the formidable and rebellious slave, of her father and her brothers. Now her father is dead, and her brothers killed in France; and, by her father's will, Plâs Einon is left to this poor little runt of a cousin. She is forty; Dick is twenty-eight. She is a woman of character and breeding. Dick is a man with hardly enough temperament to relieve his awkwardness. She has a passion for the family and its continuance; he thinks only of himself and his comfort. It is nothing that Miss Vaughan easily makes us believe that Gwenllian should determine to marry her cousin; it is a feat of real novelist's skill that she should make the courtship and the marriage not only plausible, but not degrading to either. From the first moment of their meeting it is destiny that drives these two together; and yet, as in the greatest tragedy, destiny is seen through and coloured by the struggling human will. Fate, too, is an illusion with which man dignifies his disasters. Spare as the book is, Miss Vaughan has space to give us, as chorus and condition of the tragedy, the country and some of the country-people. She has a rare gift for packing much into a sentence. Who has not seen Mrs. Einon-Thomas unforgettably in the few words "She seemed to have been very tired for a number of years"? In the same way, briefly and unemphatically poor Dickie is allowed to give himself away, to betray his commonness, his conventionality, his deplorable lack of any heroic or disciplined standards. He is mildly vain and scarcely realises that she has married not to keep Plâs Einon, but to hand it on, free of debt, unmortgaged, so that an Einon-Thomas may rule where an Einon-Thomas has ruled for centuries. The tragedy marches with deadly decision. The son is born. Dickie, bored and restless with the slow country life and his ageing wife, comes across an old friend, "Flash" Frank. Frank helps him to spend his money, and to raise more money to spend. The end then is inevitable. Gwenllian has married Dickie not for her happiness or his pleasure, but for the House. He threatens the security of the House: he must go. One quotation must suffice to show the power of Miss Vaughan's writing. At a local ball Gwenllian meets an old lover, dances with him, and dreams; here is the wakening from the dream:

> To steady her sight, that had become blurred, she fixed her eyes on the first man she saw before her. He was insignificant, not worth a glance, but he would serve her turn. His chest was flat, his slender shoulders sloped, and his mouth was too soft and small for a man's mouth. There was scarcely any colour in his face, and his little moustache and eyebrows were pale as straw. He had blue eyes of the light shade she disliked. They were at present bloodshot. He'd been drinking too much champagne, she told herself. He looks the sort of poor weak thing who'd drink. Suddenly he returned her stare and scowled; and she knew him.

So Dickie gets his sentence. Even those who prefer fiction less disciplined than this will scarcely be able to resist the fascination of Gwenllian's strong, simple figure drawn in the great tradition of heroic tragedy.

RICHARD SUNNE

NEW NOVELS

A Wife and Child. By ELEANOR REID. Benn. 7s. 6d.
Maids and Mistresses. By BEATRICE KEAN SEYMOUR. Heinemann. 8s. 6d.
Public Affaires. By BARBARA WORSLEY-GOUGH. Gollancz. 7s. 6d.
The House by the Bay. By ROBERT GATHORNE-HARDY. Collins. 7s. 6d.
Devil's Tor. By DAVID LINDSAY. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.
Czardas. By JENO HELTAI. Translated by WARRE B. WELLS. Cape. 7s. 6d.
A Modern Hero. By LOUIS BROMFIELD. Cassell. 7s. 6d.

There are some novelists whose treatment of their personages bears a strong resemblance to the methods of the mediæval witch; first they make a rudimentary wax figure and then proceed to stick it full of pins. Such, for instance, is the technique of Richard Aldington; while Miss Reid, the author of *A Wife and Child*, a book not unlike *The Colonel's Daughter*, goes to work with finer-fingered feminine savagery. The result, if it achieves nothing else, shows how eloquently woman can hate woman.

Sheer hatred gives the novel its coherence. It is the story of an odious suburban clan into whose midst the wife and child of an artist brother are precipitated by that brother's sudden demise. His wife is reported to have been a cook; Mother, bedridden and almost senile, Father, good-natured but somewhat foolish, their three detestable daughters and horrid daughter-in-law sit round variously ruminating the unwelcome news. Mother, on the whole, takes it best:

> The hand that Father was not holding moved toward the grapes. She withdrew her other hand from Father and tremblingly detached a grape and put it into her large mouth. As she munched, the big pale globes of her prominent eyes gazed emptily at the family. She had the look of an old battered and unresponsive idol. . . .
>
> "A wife and child," said Sybil on a deep organ note. . . . "A cook," said Sybil. Mother's tears dried up as though suddenly and blisteringly damned at the source. She rolled her eyes towards Sybil and regarded her for a space with the sort of cold round stare an octopus might be imagined giving its destined prey. The fumes of old battles seemed to sidle almost palpably down the air. . . . "Very nice girls, cooks," quavered Mother belligerently.

Indeed, Mother is the only character in the entire narrative for whom it is possible to experience a gleam of liking. The wife herself, though conceived as sympathetic, remains in spite of everything a lay figure, and the other personages are shadowy or distinct in proportion as the author's hatred is vague or vivid.

Savagely humorous at moments the book is; whereas *Maids and Mistresses*, by Mrs. Beatrice Kean Seymour is innocent of humour in any form—even in the form of self-criticism. A lengthy, subdued, earnest-toned affair; across five hundred and ninety ample pages the reader follows the footsteps of Sally Dunn, a charming but rather colourless little maid-servant. With Sally he peeps interminably through the keyhole. Not that Sally would, in fact, have stooped so low—she is "one of nature's ladies," after all—but things have a way of happening when she is about. And through Sally's eyes and Sally's deprecating ears—she seems to inspire confidence in those who employ her and their finest rows are usually staged in her vicinity—he learns the momentous secrets of several ménages, before qualifying to become the spectator of her own life.

Poor Sally! She often blushes to the point of tears, since her creator is nothing if not "frank," and perpetual disillusionment attends her progress. Marriages totter and crash while she looks on; and the only comfort one can find for the luckless girl is that she should have fallen into the kindly clutches of Mrs. Kean Seymour and escaped the frolicsome claws of Miss Worsley-Gough. Gravely as her innocence was often wounded in the *milieu* of Mrs. Kean Seymour's Hansons and Yorkes, she was not condemned to bring in early morning tea, her cheeks tingling with this type of conversation:

> "Don't you feel conscience-stricken when you think of me?"
> "Never, darling. And I think of you constantly."
> "But you've smirched my fair name. Don't forget that you've seduced me, Nigel."
> "I admit I'm fairly absent-minded, but I'm really not likely to forget that. My poor little tarnished trophy. . . ."

Sally would have professed herself "not amused," and, for different reasons, that verdict has one's support. The best thing about *Public Affaires* is the title—it so wittily sets the tone of the succeeding chapters.

With Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, Sally would have been quite safe. His new novel describes the same world as its predecessor and is written with the same careful lack of emphasis. The method is, if anything, too restrained; vulgarity and false emotionalism have been excluded, but, like the malevolent fairies in the tale, have revenged themselves by a characteristic parting shot. They cannot deprive the novelist of his good taste, but they have added an acrimonious proviso that his exercise of it shall occasionally border on the insipid; that the inhabitants of *The House by the Bay*—that elegant English Colonial mansion, situated in the remote territory of "New Berkshire"—though observed with bland shrewdness as they come and go, shall somehow suggest the courtiers of Sleeping Beauty.

A cobweb here and there is not unpleasant; and within their limits Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's personages are real, unpretentious and rather likable. Mrs. Bones and Miss Flick are especially good, the last being an agreeably Dickensian figure—she might have fitted very well into the pages of *Dombey*—who has a habit of italicising key-words by spelling them out in the approved phonetic fashion:

> "What do you think of this talk about the mist?" said Eliza to Miss Flick.
> "What do I think, dearie? S-T-U-F, stuff, that's what I think!"

A sound criticism, incidentally, of the next book; Mr. Lindsay's enormous *Devil's Tor* has as its setting a moor and moorland mist, with craggy shapes looming up amid the drizzle. The narrative begins in a terrific thunderstorm; a young woman and an older man are on the road, and the young woman expresses her conviction that there is an ancient tomb hidden beneath the Tor. At this moment—or, to be exact, six pages later—a thunderbolt demolishes the mass of rock and exposes a mysterious staircase into the hill. Her companion ventures down the following morning, and enjoys a strange glimpse of another life. Then, as opportunely, an earthquake blocks the passage; and the novel—chapter eight—is under way.

Stuff? Unfortunately, one must answer yes—unfortunately, since Mr. Lindsay, in happier moments, shows an undoubted,

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though ponderous, skill in the use of words. Imagine a Brocken Orgy at which Villiers de l'Isle-Adam—not the story-teller but the poet who wrote *Axël*—dances hand in hand with Sheridan Le Fanu. . . . The resulting effect is wild and phantasmagoric; and an element of sheer "stuff," which one cannot deny, is relieved by odd touches of poetic beauty. *Devil's Tor* seems as indigestible as a roc's egg; but parts, when one has cracked the shell, are excellent.

Czardas, too, has its own streaks of egregious silliness. An airman, invalided out of the Austrian army—he was shot down and has spent many months in hospital—returns broken-spirited to ordinary life, still pursued by the creatures of his disordered brain. He drifts into a furtive cheap hotel and, though he longs to rebuild his former existence and hates with an intensity of loathing his squalid room, finds that all initiative has drained away and that brandy and dreams of the past are his only comfort.

So he cogitates and boozes vaguely hour by hour; old loves and old passions return to his bed. Or gets up and wanders moodily about the town, looking for the traces of a vanished past. In the end, he overtakes an important survivor; a little girl, whom he had idolised when he was a child, has made her name as a fashionable *cocotte*. . . . Some sentimentality and more wool-gathering. The atmosphere of this perverse and tormented story might be compared to that of Heine's *Florentine Nights*, considerably vulgarised for the purposes of a German film. But Jeno Heltai, alas, is not Heine; and it takes genius to ride a nightmare past the winning-post.

In conclusion, an extremely solid slice of life; by no means one of those delicate transparent slivers that English novelists have a way of serving up, but a substantial slab of contemporary Americana, packed with incident and heavily flavoured with the air of doom. On the penultimate page *A Modern Hero* "slays" his wife, and on the first—the same hero, but then a circus-boy—is seen creeping from the bedroom of the girl who is afterwards to bear him a bastard son. He himself is the bastard child of a Jewish financier; and finance blindly seething in his blood—his mother is a trainer of performing leopards and thus helps to confirm his predatory instincts—drives him towards the bad eminence from which he tumbles.

The book is very long, but very thorough. *Twenty-Four Hours* was more convincing as a novel; but *A Modern Hero* can be recommended as a *tour de force*. Above all, it is an achievement in compression; enough material has been poured into the mould to provide the substance of half a dozen slighter stories. *A Modern Hero* has some of the virtues of *An American Tragedy*, but eschews the extreme shoddiness of its narrative method.

PETER QUENNELL.

MR. CHESTERTON'S CHAUCER

Chaucer. By G. K. CHESTERTON. Faber and Faber. 12s. 6d.

As a critic Mr. Chesterton has been underrated. It is true he is not a "scientific" critic; his criticism is a series of acute impressions on individual authors, rather than a logical, intellectual system, complete with its own categories and catchwords. But it is none the worse for that. After all, the aim of criticism is to make one appreciate good writing. And the peculiar, essential qualification of the critic is a just and catholic taste: the power to detect what is good, and to isolate, and convey to the reader, the particular qualities that go to make it so. Without this flair, no amount of systematic logic or original theory is of any value, because it is founded on the wrong premises. There is no more value in a criticism, however logical and brilliant, that sets out to prove that *Paradise Lost* was a bad poem than there is in a medical diagnosis that set out to prove that cancer was a mild disease. It is the distinguishing mark of the great English critics, Dryden, Lamb, Hazlitt, that they had this flair; and to a greater degree than almost any modern critic it is the distinguishing mark of Mr. Chesterton. Like them he has evolved no new system of incomprehensible critical values and unpleasing critical terminology; but, like them, he knows a good thing when he sees it.

Of course, his sympathies have their limitations; his dislike of pessimism did, for a time at least, make him blind to the splendour of Hardy's genius. But on the whole his appreciation is extraordinarily catholic; his little book on Victorian literature is equally and discriminatingly appreciative of Carlyle and Arnold, Tennyson, Swinburne and Fitzgerald. And he does not only appreciate them; he picks out to praise exactly those qualities of style and standpoint which give each his especial place in the temple of letters. If all their works were lost anyone who had read Mr. Chesterton's brief sentences on them would have caught an authentic whiff of their individuality.

But, and this perhaps accounts for his lack of recognition, Mr. Chesterton is not primarily a critic. He is a thinker, even a preacher: with his gospel too much at heart to be long absent from his lips. He enjoys books; he has a natural genius for perceiving what is good in them; but they are interesting to him in the first place in so far as they express a point of view. And he is more concerned to expound their author's view of life and compare it with Mr. Chesterton's own than to discuss their specifically literary qualities.

This is especially true when he is writing of an author with whose point of view he is in natural sympathy, Dickens or Browning. And it is more than ever true when he writes on Chaucer. For Chaucer is the one great English writer of that mediæval period, which is to Mr. Chesterton the golden age of history. From a literary point of view, this has its disadvantages. For one thing, he does not write so much about Chaucer's literary side as we should like. We are disappointed of that acute analysis of his author's actual style which he gave us in his book on Browning, or of his author's characters that he gave us in his book on Dickens. Moreover, he looks on Chaucer so much as a typical representative of his age and country that he tends, at times, to lose sight of his personal qualities, those minor, unforgettable idiosyncrasies, unique to himself and owing nothing to external forces, which give him individuality.

For example, Mr. Chesterton is no doubt right in insisting that Chaucer's sceptical reflection on the fate of Palamon's soul after death is not the sign of religious infidelity that it would be to-day. But Chaucer, though possibly a devout, was not a spiritual nature. And the lines do breathe a gentle flippancy, which gives them their charm, and which Mr. Chesterton, in his anxiety to point out the universal religious conviction held in the fifteenth century, seems to ignore. Again he uses Chaucer's humour to show his Englishness; the Nonne priest's tale, he says, could not have been written by a Frenchman. As a matter of fact, tales just like it were written all over Europe at that period; and Chaucer's peculiar brand of irony and commonsense has many more parallels in the land of Montaigne than the land of Dickens.

But in spite of these small blemishes a page of Mr. Chesterton's is far more illuminating than most of the books of Chaucer's other critics put together. He brings out more forcibly than anyone has before the scale of Chaucer's genius; the fact that with all his playfulness and simplicity he was a poet in the grand manner, as much in that profound, sunlit philosophy which is the foundation of his humour as in his moments of stark, massive tragedy; and that if he chose the level trodden causeway through the midst of life, it was not for want of realising the heights and depths above and below him.

It is in this combination of commonsense point of view with literary genius on the grand scale that Mr. Chesterton rightly sees the peculiar secret of Chaucer's greatness. And here we come to the foundation of his general thesis; which is that such a combination could only have been possible in the mediæval world. In no other civilisation has man had room to develop himself on so many sides while yet organising his life in a firm and harmonious order; and, Mr. Chesterton thinks, such depth and sanity will not be possible again in literature till we have returned to the ideal of the middle ages.

Mr. Chesterton pleads his case with an enchanting brilliance and fire and, it must be added, fairness. He says, indeed, that Catholics know "by a sort of convergent commonsense" that Shakespeare was a Catholic, apparently forgetting that many Protestants and ignostics have claimed Shakespeare for themselves with equal confidence and an equal lack of certain evidence. But this is almost the only place where party spirit has blinded his eyes. All the same, his general position is a controversial one. It may indeed be true that Chaucer owes the merit of his point of view to the civilisation in which he lived. It may also be true that if that civilisation had gone on till to-day we should all of us be much happier and better. But it did not go on. And one cannot help wondering if this does not mean that it had some fundamental defect and that, in point of fact, that very unyielding orderliness for which Mr. Chesterton so admires it was not an unsuitable structure for the shifting, changing, developing material of human nature. The guilds may have

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provided a juster economic system than modern capitalism; but it was a system too rigid to adapt itself to the development that took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The feudal system, too, may have provided juster social relations than were possible in the chaos of to-day. But the feudal system was strictly bound to the commands of a static, agricultural community. Finally, mediæval intellectual outlook with all its brilliance and elevation could not adapt itself to assimilate the enormous complexity of ideas and facts that poured into the human mind with the Renaissance. Human life is a fluid force; the views of the middle ages were rigid and static. And in the end, objectionable though the idea may be to academic thinkers, whether of thirteenth century England or of twentieth century Russia, the fluid force will inevitably break the rigid and static system to bits.

However, such a view cannot but seem cloudy and cowardly to so gallant a champion of his faith as Mr. Chesterton. And so infectious is his confidence, so generous his sympathies and so witty his pen that while one is reading his pages one feels it to be cloudy and cowardly too.

DAVID CECIL.

LONDON

City of Encounters. By THOMAS BURKE. Constable. 8s. 6d.

London. By H. G. CORNER. Longmans. 3s. 6d.

In *City of Encounters* Mr. Burke continues the description of London life begun in *The Wind and the Rain*. He writes still in the first person, but more about others and less about himself. One chapter, "A Nest of Singing Birds," resumes the youthful narrative and gives his adventures in a literary agency, where as the modest author of a few stories he made his first appearance wearing a school cap and was kept waiting while the staff looked for a Mr. Burke who had an appointment. Afterwards he had shy glimpses of Edward Thomas, H. G. Wells, Prince Kropotkin and Theodore Dreiser; he lost lunch-hours poring over a new manuscript from one of these gods; he wrote poems of his own. This fragment of autobiography has the attractive qualities of Mr. Burke's earlier writings about himself—a blend of shyness and candour and clear-sighted romanticism.

But for the most part in his new book Mr. Burke loses himself in London—if "lose" is the right word for a man who knows his way about as Mr. Burke does. He walks as naturally about London as many people do in the country. The big sights, famous buildings and picturesque dead-ends do not interest him; monuments are as boring as the monumental spirit they enshrine. He prefers the street corner, the public house, the assorted row of shops. His attitude, indeed, is the old one of the artist, that what is lasting and profound in life is the commonplace. London is of all great cities the most commonplace. Even its beauties, except for the parks and squares and a few preserved neighbourhoods and buildings, are commonplace—to the immediate eye at any rate. "Let the American criticism be granted," Mr. Burke says, "that London is dirty, ungainly and hopelessly behind the age."

> And still London is a great city. Still it has something that slips past the judgment and censure of its most exacting critics and leaves them admiring. Dickens had all the worst faults of all the most inept novelists, but still, when his critics have damned him to the end of their breath, their last gasp is a *gloria*. So with London, which the novels of Dickens, in their splendid profligacy, exemplify. Ugly it may be to some minds: exasperating, too, in its unrelated ardour and profusion. But London is a work of art created by generations of minds, and a work of art, though it may defy all the laws of the sublime and beautiful, is yet greater than beauty.

Here, rather curiously, Mr. Burke contradicts his meaning by the terms of his expression; for what he means, presumably, is that London, like a Dickens novel, is less a work of art than a work of genius. London most certainly is not a work of art: those who prefer architecture to life are always telling us so in terms of varying stridency. London has neither the unity nor the unchangeability of a work of art. There are streets in London which change their character so completely in mist and sunshine that, relying on memory, one may easily lose one's way from a vagary of the weather. If there is any one quality of townscape common to all parts of London, north or south of the river, it is the severe line of smoky identical houses with clustered or branching iron chimneys. On a wet day Queen's Road, Battersea, is one of the most desolate streets in the world—a positive and almost frightening desolation. Round the river and at places by the railways the monotonous dark expanse and severe outline of walls and windowless buildings can produce tremendous effects. In the drab region of King's Cross you get this extraordinary unexpected severity for half a mile along the high-walled York Road, where it runs towards Camden Town through railway sidings and above them; so that in the evening when the road itself is in shadow the sun slants overhead on clouds of shifting opal steam and a distant cliff of buildings. Mr. Burke confesses that there are roads in London where he has never dared to go, such is their forbidding personality; and anyone who knows London at all in the sense that he does will understand him.

Most of his chapters describe people he has met in London, and known well: a curio-dealer in Theobald's Road, the orchestra of a defunct music-hall, Charlie Chaplin, a girl in a lodging-house, and several others. They are for him the true Cockney. The long sketch of Chaplin is the most intimate description of him we have had, and yet it lacks something which Mr. Burke has managed to put into the other characters of his book. He hates wealth and pretension and the lives of the conventionally successful; one feels that he does not quite forgive Charlie his money and success. His portrait of the curio-dealer is richer and more amusing, and assumes almost mythological proportions. Commonplace and eccentric mean for him in the end much the same thing. His book is a vindication of London and of Cockney life.

Mr. Corner's historical sketch of London falls rather flat after Mr. Burke. It is a useful and compact narrative of facts, but misses the life of the town, which for Mr. Burke is all-important. So many buildings have been built and lived in and pulled down that the catalogue of "historic sites" is apt to be as oppressive as a spreading cemetery. Still Mr. Corner knows what he is writing about, is remarkably thorough, and avoids sentimentality.

SKALD!

Heimskringla, or The Lives of the Norse Kings. By SNORRE STURLASON. Edited with notes by ERLING MONSEN, and translated into English with the assistance of A. H. SMITH. Heffer. 18s.

During the last few years there has been a noticeable increase of Scandinavian translations—a third attempt, as it were, to capture the English mind. The first wave of interest began with Laing and Dasent. The second owed its strength to the poetic enthusiasm of William Morris. But there seems something in the genius of the English race which rejects its Nordic ancestry of imagination, and some secret instinct to hide the Anglo-Saxon bondage. Mr. Arthur Machen and others have detected the Celtic strata in this country, but few, if we except Mr. Gordon Bottomley, have disturbed the dragon of Beowulf. On the other hand, Scandinavia renews itself in its racial mythology and history.

This new translation of the *Heimskringla* revives the question—Are we repelled by the strict convention of a semi-archaic style? There are lovers of Middle English words and noun-compounds, but the majority are enraged by words such as "bane" "garth," "well-waxen." Even the fine novels of Sigrid Undset, for instance, with their realistic treatment of mediæval Norway, are cluttered with "e'en," "forsooth," "by my troth." This translation of Snorre Sturlason is less stylistic than the poetic translations of William Morris and Magnusson, and it seems churlish to complain—Mr. Smith, in fact, has hit on some lusty Yorkshire words; but one wonders whether a straightforward version might not have been more effective. For the main interest of Snorre Sturlason is not his quaintness but his astonishing insight and method—astonishing for the thirteenth century.

The learned introduction scarcely brings out for the ordinary reader the real romance of Sturlason's attitude. He was a romantic, like Sir Walter Scott, and at the same time the pioneer of modern history. The Iceland and Norway of his time were feudal, internecine, but he looked back to the heroic period and attempted to revive the sagas. He even called his house Valhalla. To-day the sagas still seem to fascinate Scandinavia, but to us it must be confessed that their hacking and hewing, their stout blows, become laborious unless we study their wonderful technique of storytelling, their shaping of character by event. Sturlason's *History of the Norse Kings*, however, is close to that conception of history from which we have not escaped. Historically he showed the rise of kingship as opposed to the claims of the nobles.

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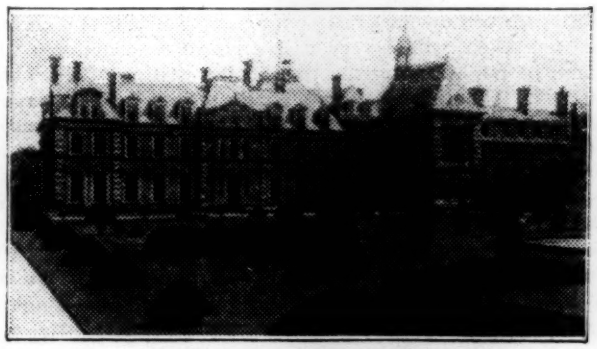

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HEINEMANN

Like most recent historians, the old Icelander ignored the common folk. In drawing on saga poems and oral tradition he compared and sifted his material, but history to him was not merely dates and crowns. He brings us the excitement of reality. To us the real interest of his book is the thoroughness with which we are brought at once into a small, compact world of real men and women. Here are shipping, cutting of corn, disputes at assemblies, kings thumping the festive board with real fists. We can hear the timber bulwarks of London Bridge crack as the ship ropes of the invaders are tautened by the rowers. We can hear the pagan bonders heckling Hacon, the Christian king. The history of St. Olav is Sturlason's masterpiece. He shows us how the king in exile and adversity turned to saintliness, and he ignores the wildness of hagiology.

> Then the king began to run his hands round the boy's neck and rubbed long at the boil until the lad opened his mouth. The king then took a loaf and broke it up and laid the bits in a shape of a cross in his hand; he then put it in the boy's mouth and he swallowed it down. After that all the ache went out of the boil and in a few days he was quite well. His mother was very glad, as were the boy's other kinsmen and acquaintances. At first it was held that King Olav had good leech hands, as they say of those men who have great skill that they have good hands. But afterwards, when his miracles were commonly known, it was reckoned as a true miracle.

In such he not only expressed the modern, rationalistic mind, but perhaps that concrete pagan mind which was disrupted by the fantasticality of mediæval religion.

Yet Sturlason is not without his wonders, set down with the brevity of a true chronicler. What passion is hidden in this strange story of King Harald Hairhair and his grief for Snaefrid, his wife!

> Afterwards Snaefrid died, but the colour of her skin never faded and she was as rosy as before when she lived. The king always sat over her and thought that she would come to life again, and thus it went on for three winters that he sorrowed over her death and all the people of his land sorrowed over his delusion. And to stop this delusion Torleiv the Wise came to his help; he did it with prudence, in that he spoke to him first with soft words, saying, "It is not strange, O king, that thou shouldst remember so bright and noble a woman and honour her with down and goodly web as she bade thee. But thy honour and hers is still less than it seems, in that she has lain for a long while in the same clothes, and it is fitter that she should be raised and the clothes changed under her." But as soon as she was raised from the bed, so there arose from the body a rotten and loathsome smell and all kinds of evil stink; speedily a funeral bale was then made and she was burned . . . She sank into ashes, and the king came to his wits.

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A detective should have something of the god about him. It was the divine, aloof, condescending quality in the old great ones of Poe, Gaboriau, Wilkie Collins and Sherlock Holmes that made their adventures so glamorously irresistible. A writer of detective stories might have a style as brilliant as Poe's, as consummately competent as Collins's, as pompously absurd as Doyle's—it did not matter: what mattered was whether he gave us a detective whom we could worship. That is why the great majority of modern writers in this kind most lamentably fail. We do not even respect, let alone worship, the detectives. The men argue with us; are not even our equals there. The exceptions are few, though striking. Miss Sayers's man is the only conspicuous exception in this bundle, quite casually collected, of recent thrillers. Lord Peter is a sort of Hermes of the criminal-detection Olympus—apparently more persiflage than pursuer, but definitely not of our clay. *Have His Carcase*, in its careful elaboration, its excellent portrayal of character, its style at once friendly and dignified, can go beside Miss Sayers's other books; beside Mr. J. J. Conington's; beside Wilkie Collins's. The rest of the English authors are pretty poor going. The best is certainly Mr. Austen Allen, whose very title exposes an ingenuity which could not be put to better use than in the writing of this kind of fiction: Mr. Allen is, however, a shade too inclined to leave too many loose ends about, and to drop a character when it becomes too much trouble to continue investigation. Mr. Ross is theatrically ineffective—all his American "bulls" bark or bellow; Mr. Robbins is elaborately null—his villain *has* a face; and Mr. Hodges's tale of German spies in the Paris of 1914 has an interest almost entirely topographical—his scoundrel is obvious and sympathetic from the first appearance. It is no doubt natural that Miss Wilkinson should think the ringing of the division bell is a sign of crime, but no one outside the sacred rank of the £400-a-year could get any thrill out of her story, while Mr. Stephenson's efforts to hide the murderer of the missing partner are almost as futile as the murderer's efforts to hide the corpse. Remains Mr. Capek. The quality of his admirable short stories can best be gauged by a quotation:

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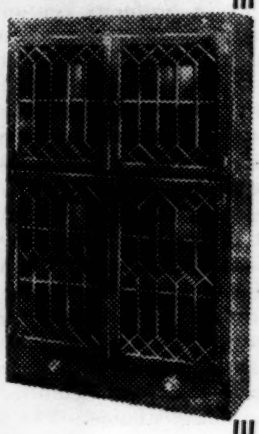

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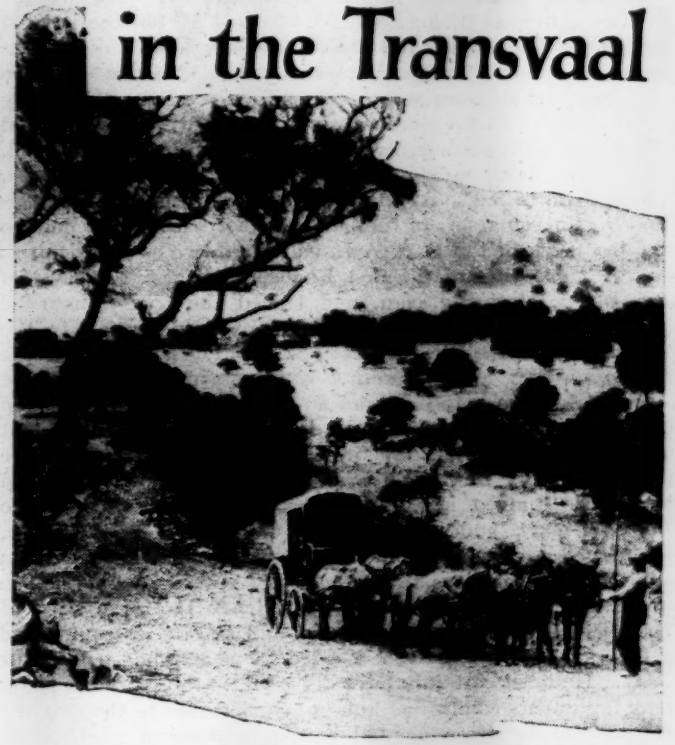

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It was right and fitting that Dr. Clement Webb, the learned editor of the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon*, should contribute the life of John of Salisbury to this series. No one could be better qualified to trace the career and expound the philosophy of that remarkable Englishman, the pupil of Abelard, the friend of Becket and Breakspear, the secretary of Archbishop Theobald, and, "by the Grace of God and St. Thomas," Bishop of Chartres. Though John of Salisbury may not have been the first Englishman to gain some sort of fumbling contact with Greek culture after the murk of the Dark Ages had lifted, we cannot deny to him the noble title of the first English humanist. Adelard of Bath was a mathematician, and lacked the true humanistic temperament, with which John was amply endowed. In the literature of the Little Renaissance the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* will always occupy a prominent place. In the earlier work there is to be found a conspectus of life in terms of philosophy, the range of subjects including church government and simony, forest laws and astrology, royal prerogatives and the ethics of military service; the *Metalogicon* is a closely reasoned plea for the study of logic. Both these books were addressed to Thomas Becket, and in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, is a copy of the *Policraticus* which Dr. Montagu James has identified as the actual copy sent by John, then in Canterbury, to Thomas, absent with Henry II at the siege of Toulouse. How far the future saint and martyr was influenced by the views of his more cool-blooded friend it would be difficult to say. He must certainly have discerned in those erudite pages many arguments confirming him in his resistance to the despotic arrogance of his sovereign, but it may be doubted whether the counsels of moderation, patience and fortitude which he found there made any more impression on his natural impetuosity than did the verbal exhortations of John himself at more than one point of his career.

Apart from his importance as a pioneer of humanism, as a thinker, and as a churchman, John of Salisbury is a fascinating figure. His life was shot through with vivid colour from his childhood, when he was sent to learn his psalter from a priest who dabbled in necromancy, to his fifth decade, when he was one of the witnesses of the last tempestuous interview between Becket and the four knights, and actually within the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral, if not within sight of the high altar, when the martyrdom was consummated. Most of his "contacts" were interesting and memorable. Though he himself never mastered Greek—as the pseudo-Greek titles of his two principal works attest—he was, to coin a term, Greek-conscious. He numbered among his correspondents John Sarrazin, "one of the very few men in Western Europe at that time who were conversant with Greek," and he lived awhile in Apulia, where the language was still spoken, and where a learned Archdeacon was then employed in translating books from Greek into Latin. Like most of his contemporaries, John had to depend on such translations for his knowledge of Hellenic philosophy, but his range of classical reading was extraordinarily wide, and in one respect he was five centuries ahead of the later Renaissance scholars—he had seen a copy of Petronius's *Supper of Trimalchio*, of which there is no mention elsewhere earlier than 1650.

Dr. Webb stresses the typically English make-up of John of Salisbury, his imperturbability, his good nature, his sense of humour, his love of compromise. As a letter-writer he compares him with Cowper, thus bringing out a certain Augustan quality in him that might otherwise have escaped observation. There are about this man a mellowness, a sunny sanity, that seem to belong rather to the England of the first George than to that of the first Plantagenet. Even his knack of happy quotations from Horace was Georgian rather than mediæval, as witness his bantering of the long-bearded Henry of Blois with these Horatian half-lines;

> Di te, Damasippe, deaeque
> Verum ob consilium donent tonsore.

With great skill John of Salisbury's first biographer has struck the balance between the two aspects of his life, showing him as a philosopher and as a man, and making him attractive in either character. The book is learned without being pedantic, readable without being undignified. No reader unversed in the subtleties of mediæval dialectic need be in the least afraid of it.

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Cornwall has never been relied on by its inhabitants to sustain them wholly or even mainly by the fruits of its soil. The wealth of the Duchy, as Cornishmen have hitherto known it, lay buried deep in the hills of granite, and in the waters which surrounded their cliff-girt home. The life of the miner and that of the sea-fisherman have ever been hard and precarious, and nowhere more so than in Cornwall.

Life was often very near the bone, and great dangers had constantly to be faced; two things which, together, often breed both dare-devil courage and an indifference to law. Among men leading such lives, far away from the centres of culture, originality of character was bound to show itself. Examples abound in these pages; and anyone who knew Cornwall even thirty years ago must have been struck by the frequency of what we are getting to look upon as eccentrics—that is, people who think for themselves.

Among other things, the modern Cornishman is celebrated for his theoretic puritanism, his Sabbatarianism and his devotion to Chapel. He has, however, always managed to keep these matters of religion and morality carefully departmentalised. It is sometimes stated that the death of smuggling was effected by the propaganda of Wesley; but there is little to support this rationalisation. Mr. Hamilton Jenkin tells us that the

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The Tobacco men always like.

PLAYER'S

NAVY MIXTURE or NAVY CUT TOBACCO

W.C.T. 98

diary of Harry Carter, brother of the celebrated "King of Prussia," "reads more like a circuit minister's commonplace book than the annals of a daring smuggler; and, whilst page after page is filled with religious 'experiences,' only such occasional entries as 'bought a cutter of 160 tons and 19 guns,' or 'surprised by two man-of-war boats while landing at Costan,' show that the worthy captain was engaged in a worldly vocation of a strangely different nature." As a matter of fact, smuggling at that time was not looked upon as a serious moral offence, even when practised on a wholesale scale. Mr. Jenkin, indeed, is carried by his epic theme to the very heights of ingenuous enthusiasm:

> It must be admitted that there was a dark side to the smuggling trade; but, even so, it must be remembered that if the smugglers were armed men, so in like manner were those whose business it was to prevent smuggling. If, under such circumstances, the conflicts which were bound to take place resulted in bloodshed, and, occasionally, even loss of life, neither side could be held solely responsible. In most cases, however, it was the smuggler's reputation which suffered.

It will be seen that the book has been written in an appropriately impartial spirit.

SHORTER NOTICES

Napoleon and the Cossacks. By PETER N. KRASSNOFF. Translated from the Russian by OLGA VITALI. Allen & Unwin. 12s. 6d.

Napoleon and the Cossacks is an historical novel dealing chiefly with the period of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. Interwoven with historical fact is the personal story of two friends and their families, Evgueny Ogloblin, a young naval officer and an aristocrat, and Kouzma Minaieff, a Cossack ensign. The balance between the two themes is excellently kept, and even in the chapters towards the end of Part IV and at the beginning of Part V, with their vivid portrait of Napoleon himself, we do not forget how his plans for nations will affect individuals in the persons of Evgueny and Kouzma. This is an enormously long book of nearly 200,000 words, but it is entirely absorbing. The translation is excellent and worthy of the fine descriptive writing, which in spite of its close attention to detail is never overloaded. There are passages of memorable beauty which linger in the mind, and others, especially of the retreat of the Grand Armée from Moscow, of equally unforgettable horror. The characters are full of life and freshness; the gentle, melancholy, intellectual Evgueny and the simple, vivacious Kouzma are equally real and equally lovable. The dialogue is natural and unstrained, and has an historical interest added to its normal function. Above all, Russia lives in this book. General Krassnoff has written an eminently satisfying novel which will not easily be forgotten.

Caps Over the Mill. By MARJORIE BOOTH. Murray. 7s. 6d.

Caps Over the Mill, by Marjorie Booth, is a story about the kind of people who could not exist outside the pages of fiction. However, the illusion of reality lasts pleasantly enough for 351 pages. The Hewlands, Evelyn, John, Natalie, Charlie and Georgina, are the children of parents who have deserted the city and financial security for a wandering life. Soon after their marriage they set out across England in a caravan. Evelyn, the eldest child, is born in a field. When their children begin to grow up they settle down in Cornwall in the caravan and a ramshackle bungalow, and begin an existence which has at last reached a measure of permanence. The children, however, in spite of their birthright of physical freedom, are throwbacks: Natalie yearns for domestic security, John for opportunities to develop a gift for stage decoration, Charlie for a financial career, and Georgie a chance to study art and become a painter of genius. The story is concerned with the conflict between parents and children before, in the last pages, the children win the day and everything ends happily for everybody.

On the Roads from Rome. By LUIGI VILLARI. Maclehose. 12s. 6d.

Even the tourist's limited view of the Roman Campagna produces a sense of its peculiar charm. Signor Villari, who has spent years wandering about this rolling plain, deseribes it with an enthusiast's pen. For its picturesque aspect alone it is worth description; the ruined towers, palaces and aqueducts dating from Imperial Rome share the landscape with the evidences of agricultural activity, equally old in origin, but undergoing immense progress in method and efficiency of late years. Signor Villari's book should please the antiquarian by its historical sketch and the accounts of tours selected almost at random amongst its classic and mediæval riches. But of equal value is his study of the conditions under which the inhabitants live to-day. He gives details about farming, sheep-rearing, and the peasant workers, many of whom grow rich at the expense of former landowners. Malaria has long been a by-word as the Campagna's curse. It may be less generally known that brigandage ran it close until recent times.

Marie Adelaide, Grand Duchess of Luxemburg. By EDITH O'SHAUGHNESSY. Cape. 12s. 6d.

Miss O'Shaughnessy tells the story of Marie Adelaide, the unhappy girl sovereign of Luxemburg, whose forced abdication at the demand of the Allies and the more revolutionary of her own people was but one of the many mean episodes of the great peace. Her only faults apparently were civility to the military leader of the unpreventable German invasion, and meeting the Kaiser when he invited himself to tea with the sovereign whose sovereignty he had outraged. Miss O'Shaughnessy's method of narration is too rhapsodical, but there does emerge from her too ornately decorated story a real portrait of a real personage.

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About Motoring

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AN imaginative manufacturer, endowed with humane sympathies, can never achieve peace of mind. If he sells gowns or cosmetics he becomes responsible for a host of idiotic marriages, and equips vamps to break up happy homes. If he constructs small cheap motor cars catalogued at £120 he certainly bestows a mighty volume of pleasure on impecunious folk, but he incidentally increases traffic congestion, multiplies serious accidents, and burdens the revenue with the expenditure of millions on expanding our road system. The motor manufacturer who markets a 100 m.p.h. vehicle, like the straight-eight Alfa-Romeo which I have just been driving, cannot start production without a qualm; for a car of this type will probably slay an unusual number of persons in proportion to the output of chassis. A conscientious flicker of the same colour assails me when I consider the new Wolseley Hornet Special, the latest edition of the well-known touring Hornets. It has just been launched on the British market with a special coach-builders' *obbligato*. All the ardent young men who spend portions of office hours in sketching racy two-seaters on their blotting-paper have been mustered to create rakish coachwork for this splendid little chassis. All the motor journals have published special advertising supplements containing the most exciting half-tones of the devilish bodies designed for the Special. Every undergraduate and undergraduette in the kingdom is probably day-dreaming about possible ownership. It unquestionably makes a remarkably handsome sports car; and it is as good—or as bad?—as it looks. There is less danger in flooding our roads with baby Austins and Morris Minors and Triumph Sevens and Singer Juniors. For if these tiny cars are so cheap that almost anybody can buy them, they are not fast, and in appearance they are obviously sedate. The majority of them are bought by aunts and mothers and fathers; a few by grannies; and the remaining percentage which sell to irresponsible owners can hardly be driven at all blue. But no aunt or mother, certainly no grandfather, will ever buy a Hornet Special. It is emphatically

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COMPANY MEETING

FRIENDS' PROVIDENT & CENTURY LIFE OFFICE

ASSURANCE CONDITIONS IN 1931

The annual general meeting of the Friends' Provident and Century Life Office was held on Wednesday last at the London head office, 7, Leadenhall Street, E.C.

MR. HAROLD J. MORLAND, M.A., J.P., F.C.A., the chairman, who presided, said: There was a falling-off in single premium assurances, and also in the larger policies issued in connection with financial transactions, to an extent which more than accounted for the decrease of £325,778 in the new business as compared with 1930. The total of £1,520,950 secured was larger than that of any year prior to 1928.

The mortality profit has been well maintained, and was, in fact, larger than in any previous year except 1930.

If you turn to the balance-sheet you will see that the invested assets of over £7,750,000 have been placed in a variety of classes of holdings. The board has not restricted its investments to gilt-edged securities, but has deemed it justifiable to venture outside that category to the extent of the purchase of a certain proportion of Debentures, Preference, and even Ordinary stocks of well-founded commercial and industrial undertakings.

The Stock Exchange securities showed almost without exception a considerable depreciation. Even British Government stocks were at lower prices than for many years past. On balance the depreciation amounted to £386,024, which was 5.3 per cent. of the funds.

The accounts of the Century Insurance Company, Ltd., are, as usual, appended to the accounts of the office.

The fire premium income was reduced by about £67,000 (nearly 20 per cent.), and amounted to £275,000. The reduction was almost wholly abroad, the home income being fully maintained. The loss ratio (allowing for reduction in unexpired risks and for reserves for contingencies no longer required) was 48.3 per cent.

The marine income has been greatly reduced by £68,000, to about £78,000.

The accident and general income was increased by about £10,000 to £275,000. The sum of £1,150 was transferred to profit and loss account.

The year 1931 was one of the most critical years in the experience of any of us, but assurance offices have emerged comparatively little affected. No body of co-operative investors is so solidly placed and has emerged from the test so successfully as the life office.

The revenue accounts and balance-sheet and report of the directors were unanimously adopted.

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a car for Bright Young People. It can do an honest 75 miles an hour; its chassis is listed at no more than £175; and before we are much older fleets of Special Hornets will be scampering about our roads. Jealousy will naturally be inspired in the bosoms of rival manufacturers. They in turn will produce a new model for the undergraduate. It will probably cost £150 without a body; and no doubt its maximum speed will be a guaranteed 80. Still, it is hardly my business to moralise, and I had better get down to my proper job, and become mechanical.

The original Hornet engine was a 12 h.p. six-cylinder, designed for high power output and great smoothness. It has been boosted by fitting high-compression pistons, double carburettors, and separate exhaust leads, whilst the lubrication system has been adapted to cope with the raised temperatures. Dual valve springs are introduced to prevent bounce at the maximum revolutions, which are set at 5,000 per minute. The work has been admirably done, for the engine remains both smooth and flexible, accelerating without a trace of roughness from five to over seventy-five miles an hour. A speed of 60 m.p.h. is possible on the third gear of the four-speed box, and silence has nowhere been sacrificed, as the sizzle of the tyres remains obtrusive up to a point well advanced in the speed range. The transmission remains normal, but has been stiffened up to cope with the increased output, and the propeller shaft has been specially balanced to limit the whirling possible at high speeds.

The roadholding is simply amazing. On road or track the little car is astonishingly steady, and steers to a hair. Considering that in chassis form the car weighs a bare half-ton, the comfort of travel is as eminent as the safety; there is hardly any suggestion that the springs and shock-absorbers have been stiffened up to cater for speed. Harshness, pitch and bounce are not more marked than is general on cheap vehicles of infinitely less vivacity. The front wheels are set with a wider track than the rear pair in the interests of stability, and the centre of gravity is very low.

The brakes have been enlarged in view of the added speed. The Lockheed hydraulic servo control is retained, with separate cable operation of the hand brakes; and the drums are a foot in diameter, and specially shaped for rigidity to eliminate brake-squeal.

Body comfort is neither desired nor expected on a car of this type, though a horde of low, squat saloons and speed *coupés* will doubtless be developed for the chassis before long; a closed body hardly makes for accessibility in this size. It is not difficult to produce comfort for the limbs in an open two-seater, even on this Lilliputian scale. It demands staggered *fauteuil* front seats—the width does not admit of two comfortable side-by-side seats. The height of the back must be ample, as must the angles of back and seat, and the fore-and-aft length of the seat cushion. Given these simple requisitions and pneumatic upholstery, the rest will follow automatically. Atmospheric comfort is less simply attained. With an ample windscreen, there is risk of pronounced suck-in from the rear, and of spill round the screen ends; even on a fine, warm day these draughts can be most unpleasant, even for Bright Young People; and on a cold, damp day the car may become a veritable cave of the winds. Actual trial of the coachwork on a bad day is therefore desirable. Coachwork of this type usually embodies rather a poor hood, with or without side curtains. But a cautious mind will eschew tophamper on such cars unless the driver be an entirely trustworthy person. The occupants should always remember that a small car is far more easily capsized than a large car; its side wheels need not be run far up an easy bank before it goes over. A fast small car runs much greater risks in this respect than a small car which is slow. If a small car capsizes, it will throw its passengers clear out of an open body on nine occasions out of ten. But if it has a light *coupé* or saloon body or even a fabric hood, it will usually break the driver's neck on the spot. I have no wish to speak lugubriously about a very charming little vehicle: but we cannot graft old heads on young shoulders, and a singularly promising lad of my acquaintance has just been instantaneously killed by a somewhat similar car of French origin.

The equipment is in keeping with the general tone of the car. It includes, for example, super head-lamps for fast work at night; a revolution counter—all the best racing men have them; a stone guard—there are hardly any loose stones on British roads; a strap over the bonnet—bonnet straps are a horrible nuisance, but they look sporting; a stumpy gear lever—this at least is really practical; an oil-cooler below the radiator—all cars should have them. Altogether a morally reprehensible but technically attractive small car.

R. E. DAVIDSON.

Playtime

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

No. 6.—INTERROGATORY.

A burglary is committed in West Kensington on the night of Thursday, February 9th. It is known to be a one-man job. The only "clues" left by the burglar are a pair of gloves, a jemmy and a dark lantern.

The police at once detain five men on suspicion: Jukes (known as "Piggy"), Puddock, Sniffwell, Kickshaw, and Titterdown. Inspector Snooper asks permission from the Commissioner to interrogate these suspects.

The Commissioner, in view of criticism in the press, is a little nervous. He finally agrees, however, that the following four questions shall be put to each of the men detained. No other question may be asked:

(1) Where were you on the Thursday night?

(2) When were you last in West Kensington?

(3) What do you know about (here are named the four men other than the one under interrogation)?

(4) Have you ever possessed housebreaking implements?

The following are the answers to these questions: (they are not answered on oath; the men are all of bad character; and hence it is not to be assumed that any answer is necessarily true).

Jukes: "I spent Thursday night at the *Dog and Duck*. I have never been anywhere near Kensington. Titterdown is the man you're looking for; he always carries a jemmy. I never do."

Puddock: "Me and Piggy went on the spree. Both of us is as white as they make 'em. I wouldn't be seen dead in Kensington either with housebreaking implements or without."

Sniffwell: "I was in bed Thursday—I've got the arthritis something awful. Puddock knows Kensington best; he's got the tools for the job too. That was his lantern wot you found there."

Kickshaw: "I was down Hammersmith way all right, if you call that West Kensington. But so was Puddock. I lent him a jemmy a week or two ago."

Titterdown: "Thursday I took my Kate to see the pictures. We came through Kensington on the way home. I've never had no illegal tools of any kind: if I wanted any, I should borrow them from Jim Puddock."

On the strength of these statements, one of the five suspects is arrested by Inspector Snooper.

Whom does he arrest?

PROBLEM 4

MURDER OF DR. ZBYSCO

Problems of this type call for (1) correct inference, and (2) evaluation of probabilities. The fantastic or wildly improbable must be rejected (*e.g.*, the passage of Mr. Pusch from one moving train to another, or the stabbing of Dr. Zbysco, at the window of a moving train, by someone stationed at the window of a train moving in the opposite direction) if reasonably probable solutions are available. Also, solutions are inadmissible which assume circumstances, not set out in the statement of the problem, that would be necessary to the solution—*e.g.*, that Zbysco's train and Pusch's stopped opposite to one another.

Dr. Zbysco was stabbed by Borer in the latter's car, outside Botherham station, between 11.8 and 11.14. His body was put in the train at Clutter, with the connivance of Pocombe and (probably) of Pusch. There are several clues in the statement of the problem which enable this inference to be drawn.

The above is the "official" solution. I have decided also (rather grudgingly) to admit the solution wherein Borer travels from Addleville, successfully evades recognition on the train, and alights at Botherham, just as the train is slowing down. This possibility has been argued with great ingenuity, and it just comes within the ambit of the circumstances as stated. (When I next publish the problem I shall alter the time at which Borer booked for Didham from 11.8 to 11.5.) I cannot admit as a solution that Borer stabbed the doctor on the platform.

Points awarded to:

Dr. L. C. Adam, J. Ainslie, M. S. Amos.
D. Barber, Blind Mole, A. L. Bulley, J. Bailey.
J. B. Channon, H. L. Cox, A. Crokingburn, Cooper, R. M. Crosskey, Crooked-Dean, G. B. Courtier, T. W. Chaundy.
C. M. Douglas, V. J. D.
R. C. Evans.
Major Fletcher, T. Faint, F. J. Forty.
G. Goodall, E. C. I. Garner, Verdant Green Nancy Garner.
N. Hartley, W. P. Hudson.
Initio.
A. J.
A. K.
W. A. Lynch, A. C. Lynch.
H. Moore, K. H. Millward, F. Morrell, Mercutio, Macbeth, F. E. Maitland L. R. M., R. M. G. MacDonald, W. B. M.
W. O'Dea, W. Oldham.
Mrs. Ponsonby, G. C. Potter, J. L. Priston.
P. M. Rose, M. Ross, L. R., J. Ross, Renaur, G. D. Rugen, Roscoe, G. G. Robb, L. G. Roussin.
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Thoriger, W. S. Tracey, A. S. Tennant.
Henry Vine, K. D. Vernon.
B. Willis, W. A. Whitehouse, C. H. Waddington, D. Wildman, C. H. M. Wilcox.
Zylo.

Competitors for the Quarterly Prize are reminded that solutions (on **foolscap**, and with names and addresses clearly shown) must reach this office, addressed to *Caliban*, not later than midday on the **following** Thursday. Consideration, however, will be given to competitors residing abroad: every effort will be made to enable them to participate.

CALIBAN.

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K'WAY. SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER. W., Th. & Sat.

QUEEN'S. HEARTBREAK HOUSE. Wed., Sat.

ST. MARTIN'S. SOMEBODY KNOWS. Tues.

STRAND. THE LOVE PIRATE. Wed. & Thur.

WESTMINSTER. Wed., Sat. & Whit Mon.
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By JOHN VAN DRUTEN.

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A Course of three Lectures on "FORM AND CONTENT" will be given (in English) by Dr. M. SCHLICK, Ph.D. (Professor of Philosophy in the University of Vienna) at KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON (Strand, W.C.2), on MAY 17th, 18th and 20th, at 5.30 p.m. At the first Lecture the Chair will be taken by Prof. H. F. Hallett, M.A., D.Litt., Professor of Philosophy in the University.

A Lecture on "THE PENAL LAWS OF ASSYRIA CIRCA 1200 B.C.," will be given by Sir JOHN MILES, M.A., B.C.L. (Fellow of Merton College, Oxford) at KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON (Strand, W.C.2), on WEDNESDAY, MAY 18th, at 5.30 p.m. The Chair will be taken by Professor Sir Denison Ross, C.I.E., Ph.D., Director of the School of Oriental Studies and Professor of Persian in the University.

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

BY TOREADOR

THE DEFAULT STAGE—DEVALUATION—TREASURY BOND ISSUE —THE OIL TRUCE?

THE world financial crisis has now entered on the general "default" stage. I do not suggest that every debtor carrying on business is about to declare with tears his incompetence to pay interest on his loans. Obviously those traders who have not borrowed extensively on mortgages or from banks can carry on at an even lower level of prices, while companies which have financed themselves by issues of shares instead of bonds can remain in business as long as they can pay their current trade bills. This applies especially to the big American corporations who profited from the national craze for common stocks in 1928–29. By "general default" I mean that debtor countries generally will give up the hopeless attempt to pay interest on their external debt, the burden of which has increased by 70 per cent. since 1928 as a result of the collapse in commodity prices. This week Greece has "temporarily" defaulted on its 7 per cent. Refugee Loan of 1924—the first League of Nations loan to suffer this fate—while the State of San Paulo has announced the issue of two-year promissory notes to meet the amounts due by way of interest and sinking fund on most of its external loans. Apart from Scandinavia, France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland, there is not a country in Europe which may not default this year on its external debt, if it has not already done so. As for South America, it would surprise no one if the two remaining non-defaulters—Argentina and Colombia—gave up the unequal fight before the year has passed.

* * *

We may now look forward to the next development of the default stage. This is currency depreciation on the part of all countries (except France and America) which have been clinging to gold—which is not to be regarded as a "bull" point for British exporters. I am glad to see that Mr. O. R. Hobson, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Financial News*, advised an audience in Berlin—at the World Commerce Week organised by the *Berliner Tageblatt*—to follow sterling. It is true that Mr. Hobson felt no confidence in the future of sterling, realising that our National Government has no monetary policy, but he did well to point to the evil results of not following sterling—the moratoria, standstills, blocked accounts, exchange restrictions, import quotas, and bilateral clearing agreements, which are now the paraphernalia of European Governments. Eventually each debtor country, seeking to restrict imports, will decide to buy no more from other countries than the amount they buy from it, which means that as between two countries trading with one another the larger of the two exports will be reduced to the level of the smaller. "The ultimate outcome of the process," said Mr. Hobson, "must be a completely Sovietised economic system, an economic body deprived of all liberty and encased in a kind of strait jacket. It is, in fact, the death of the capitalist system as we know it." Another point of Mr. Hobson's: "The remedy (defaults and trade restrictions) is continually aggravating the disease. The catastrophic fall in world prices which lies at the root of the whole trouble is actually accelerated by the very damming up of the channels of trade which is intended to combat its effects."

* * *

But the remedy which Mr. Hobson seems to prefer is no remedy at all. He looks forward hopefully to a general revaluation of gold currencies. He speaks of the "simultaneous devaluation of their currencies by the leading gold standard countries as a means of countering future large changes in the value of gold." But even if the Lausanne reparations conference turned itself into a currency conference and arrived at an agreed measure of devaluation for all the gold standard currencies, would it bring about the rise in commodity prices? The Central Banks would have their gold reserves on paper increased by the amount of the devaluation, but they would have to create additional money and get it into circulation and use (as distinct from hoarding) before the rise in prices would eventuate. How would this be accomplished if business confidence were lacking? The U.S. Federal Reserve authorities are finding it very difficult to engineer a rise in prices by an expansion of credit—although they are purchasing $100 millions of Government securities per week. If the whole gold standard world had devalued at the end of 1930, would it have stopped the fall in prices? I think not, because the forces making for deflation had already been set to work and the unsound financial and economic positions created during the boom were in process of being uncovered and corrected. Devaluation, on Mr. Hobson's showing, would always come after the event—that is, after the fall in gold prices: in other words, it would always come too late. The lesson of this slump is that currencies will have to be managed on much more thorough and scientific lines, and that the gold standard system, even if improved by machinery for altering the gold content of currencies periodically, cannot be relied upon to work automatically towards stability of price levels. We come back to the abandonment of the gold standard system as the only alternative to a repetition of these world financial crises. An inconvertible paper currency based upon a composite price index number and managed from month to month should be the aim of our monetary policy. I have received from a correspondent an interesting memorandum in support of this thesis to which I hope to return later on.

* * *

The new 3 per cent. Treasury Bond issue by tender is a clever move designed to stimulate the boom in long-dated British Government securities, and prepare for the conversion of 5 per cent. War Loan. The ostensible purpose of the issue is to repay the £64½ millions of 4 per cent. Treasury Bonds 1931–33 on August 15th next, and to reduce the floating debt. The Treasury was probably afraid lest an increase in the floating debt—the effect of which is to force up interest-rates and militate against a further rise in long-dated Government funds—should have been brought about by (a) a large proportion of holders of National Savings Certificates that fell due this year refusing or failing to convert, (b) a seasonal increase in Treasury Bills during the early summer, and (c) the financing of dollar and franc purchases as part of the Exchange Stabilisation programme if a demand for sterling later on forced a rise in the exchange rates. The novel feature of the new issue is the low nominal rate of interest—the minimum price for tenders being 97¾—and the high sinking fund, the bonds being redeemable at par by means of annual drawings of not less than 10 per cent. of the nominal amount originally created. The issue is not particularly liked by the discount houses, seeing that it is neither fish nor fowl, neither short nor long, but applications amounting to £120 millions showed that the Banks were not ill-disposed. On the repayment of the Treasury 4 per cent. 1931–33, we shall have the following left:—

Amount of Loan (Millions).	Stock.	Accrued Interest. £ s. d.	Price.	Flat Yield %. £ s. d.	Redemption Yield %. £ s. d.
£14	Treasury 4½% (1st Feb., 1933)	1 3 2	101¾	4 8 4	2 5 5 (1933)
£140	Treasury 4½% (1st Feb., 1932-34), (repayable at 3 months notice) ..	1 3 2	101	4 9 2	3 17 6 (1934)
£51	Treasury 4½% (1st Feb., 1934)	1 3 2	102 7/16	4 7 9	3 1 2 (1934)
£115	Treasury 5% (1st Feb., 1933-5)	1 5 9	102 1/16	4 17 10	2 3 4 (1933) 4 3 9 (1935)
£105	Treasury 4% (15th Apl., 1934-6)	0 4 5	102½	3 18 3	2 17 3 (1934) 3 8 4 (1936)

It is obvious that the Treasury will shortly be making a conversion offer to holders of Treasury 4½ per cent. 1932-34, and that next year, in addition to the repayment of Treasury 4½ per cent. 1933, the Treasury 5 per cent. 1933-35 will be paid off on their first date.

* * *

The diversion of the week in the speculative markets has been the rumour that the oil war has been brought to an end. When Sir Henri Deterding is found shaking hands with Soviet Government officials, we may be induced to believe that the slump has ended, but we must not jump to conclusions. A conference is actually to be held in New York to discuss a world oil restriction scheme propounded by Mr. Aug. Kessler, one of the managing directors of the Royal Dutch–Shell group. No doubt an opportunity will be taken to settle the outstanding problem in the British oil market—a new quota agreement for the Russian Oil Products. This deal completed, the only competition left will be that of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, which sells Cleveland motor spirit here at 2d. below the combine prices. But this competition is being taken care of by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, which proposes to buy out all the foreign interests of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana. When the price of petrol in Great Britain has been advanced by 3d. per gallon, we shall not be so scared of our oil shares.

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